MORNING THOUGHTS

BY

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PREFACE

SOME *years ago it occurred to me to examine the contents of my mind by pouring out every day without premeditation such thoughts as happened to be uppermost in it. Accordingly, I spent a few minutes in doing this every morning,—not more than ten or fifteen; and I wrote without care, just as the thoughts came. Hence these pages are no more than private notes or memoranda, relating to some sections of my mental furniture.*

Afterwards, when friends advised me to publish them, I thought it would perhaps be more amusing than useful to do so. But later, on reconsideration, and after having let many years go by, I at last decided to have them printed for circulation within a very narrow circle. What really induced me to agree to it was the thought that it might do some good to my nephews and other youths to read and think over them occasionally, while travelling along their own paths in life.

Good Feelings

Is there anything in life that one can call one's own except the soul? Nothing belongs to man in this world except by way of temporary possession. Even possession is a questionable term to use; "for temporary use" or "to be temporarily related to in a certain way" would perhaps convey the idea more accurately.

We have no 'property' in anything in this world. Property is a purely legal conception, and the relation it denotes exists only in certain circumstances, themselves the creatures of juristic conceptions.

We stand in a certain relation to things around us, and even when those things disappear, the relation may still continue in the realm of Reality where we all live, now and for ever. Any external change matters little. The permanent is in the soul. Therefore, it is for us to value and develop those relations only which can be a part of our permanent being. They are no more than good feelings abiding in the soul—the soul's purest energies.

Life an Examination

This world, this life! A hopelessly inexplicable mystery, or a simple transparent truth—

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Life an Examination

This world, this life! A hopelessly inexplicable mystery, or a simple transparent truth—

whichever you like. We are taught to think of this world as a great thing and a very large portion of space, and to reckon collective human life by centuries. Yet this large world of ours is but a speck in infinite space, and our life on it a mere breath. While living here and now, we forget that we are living and shall always live in a much bigger world and for all time. Why should we not be conscious of this truth, every moment that we draw breath? If we believe our three score and ten years to be all that we have, we are already dead—and eternally dead!

Those who sit in an examination room for three hours do not take that period as their whole career in life, though they know that their whole career on earth would be affected, in some way, by the result of that examination. We are undergoing a more important examination—which lasts a whole life-time, and the results of which affect all our eternity.

Wealth

What is one's real wealth? Sunlight and air; the skies and the stars; hill and dale and stream; trees and flowers; song-birds and song-books, and our own good thoughts. With all these at one's disposal, one may well consider oneself the richest man in the world!

The wealth found in Nature may also be found in books. But we have to take our soul along with us when we go to them. If not, they refuse to reveal their riches.

What does Nature contain? Poetry and philosophy in actual life-form. What do books contain? Poetry and philosophy in ideas and words.

Poetry reveals the secret of beauty in Nature, and Philosophy the secret of Truth—the oneness of all Being. They take us to God—and become Religion.

Man's Duty towards Self

Is there no work for a human being except that which is done with hands and feet? Is it only physical achievement that matters? What about the inner life, which goes on in its own way—often unheeded? Can I afford to leave it uncontrolled, and allow all impulses or inborn suggestions, whether good or evil, to have free play in the mind so long as they remain concealed from others? Can I say that I am too busy with the external affairs of life to concern myself seriously with the internal? Can I say that, if I perform all outward acts with apparent decency, it matters little what I carry within?

There is a period of life during which one loses that fineness of moral perception which one valued in the dawn of manhood, when the heart was more apt to be thrilled by noble sentiments. We gradually come down from that chivalrous height of morality which the spirit occupied in early youth. Our spiritual standard is gradually lowered, till the dignity and sanctity of life become temporarily clouded in our perception.

The consciousness of the moral degradation of the spirit, which acts as a sting for the more sensitive, may ultimately be the means of our redemption.

Resignation

When we feel powerless and helpless against superior forces, whether divine or human, we are advised to be patient and resigned. But is not resignation a state of passive acquiescence implying mental depression? Could we not rise to a state of hopeful serenity? What is not possible for the ordinary mortal becomes possible for the sage, whose emotions are under the control of his will.

Most of those events which cause grief or perturbation and demand resignation on our part involve some loss or privation. Loss of wealth is nothing to the sage, because he never regards it as a loss. Loss of bodily comforts can affect him as little, for his body to him is a machine whose condition matters little to his soul. The loss of honour, however, is a different thing. But honour to him does not mean any dignity conferred by others; it means his own consciousness of being honest and honourable and worthy of being honoured by his fellow-beings. As such, it is only his own conduct that can cause loss of honour to him, viz., his own evil-doing.

When the mind is too weak to feel the utmost intensity of grief, it is said to have become patient and resigned. This may be good enough for the ordinary mortal, but is it worthy of the

sage or the man of faith? He must rise above this; he must feel, not only tranquil and unperturbed, but calmly cheerful.

Inwardness of Philosophy and Religion

Is not philosophy something more than mere "System-making"? Does not its history show that it has lost its way in such attempts? But then how are we to understand if we do not use the ordinary processes of thought and the discursive method, and if we do not theorise in the beginning or the end? Is there a middle course between this and pure intuition? Is there any such state of the mind as can enable us to obtain knowledge of reality without the use of thought-processes? Does it not seem as though any thought on such questions, any belief engendered by them, must in itself be some form of theorising? Science and philosophy cannot avoid it. Science, dealing with material conditions, can test its theories by verification; but how about philosophy? Does it really gain anything by using exactly the same processes as science does?

Apart from all this, has philosophy, or has it not, a certain inwardness which science knows not of, something connected with our inner self, which is incapable of analysis, classification, verification? Is it not essentially the same in its ultimate aim and effect as religion in the most comprehensive sense?

Mind and Body

How far ought we to allow ourselves to be influenced by mere sensations—viz., pleasure and

pain? It is difficult to disregard these altogether; for when the body suffers, the mind must also suffer. But to what extent and in what degree should it consent to be affected in this manner? Saints, philosophers and heroes have scorned bodily suffering; but that happened in a state of mental exaltation when the whole nervous system was so highly strung, and when the body was so completely under the domination of the excited and exalted mind as not to feel any sensation at all. Many are the instances of soldiers on the battlefield, whose limbs were shot off without their feeling any pain whatever. But in ordinary life, when the body feels more than ordinary discomfort, ought not the mind to be trained to overlook the fact and go on its own way as though unconcerned? If we could only achieve this, all discomforts would disappear: pain would be lulled, and our anxiety to gain or preserve comforts, which often leads us into evil ways, would cease. A little wholesome stoicism is good as an ally.

Work and Art

What does the artist give to the world—his art, or his work, or his soul? All these. What does his art subserve but his work which is self-expression? Is not art merely the process by which he gives to his ideal a concrete form, the means to an end, the end in itself being the bodying forth and conveying to others of what is in him—a soul's message to other souls?

Art may be raised into a cult, and its worshippers are prone to mistake the instrument

for the work which it is employed to produce. When we see a beautiful picture or a beautiful statue, we think neither of the materials used nor of the way in which it was executed, but of itself: whether it is beautiful or not, whether or not it takes us towards the ideal that was in the artist's mind. If we are drawn towards that ideal even one step, it has conveyed its message to us, and we feel that we are on the road along which the artist meant to take us.

Art is concerned with the study of form, but form alone is not what the artist aims at. He endeavours to attain the highest excellence of form only in order to bring the completed result as near as he can to the ideal in his mind, and thus convey to us some message from his soul. Art, therefore, though indispensable in some forms of self-expression, is not an end in itself. It has a further end—to please the soul. It is one among the innumerable conductors of soul-messages, and there are to us innumerable ways open for receiving and transmitting such messages.

* * *

Rest and Reading

What is our idea of rest, apart from mere physical inactivity? Would rest be possible unless the mind was in a state of tranquillity, unmoved by any emotion either of pleasure or of pain? Anything that disturbed its serenity, in however small a degree, would interfere with its rest. Even pleasure can be disturbing. My

mind is not at rest when I experience any sensation of pleasure that causes the least excitement. The greater the thrill of pleasure, the greater the excitement and the less the serenity of mind.

When I read a book I feel at rest, but if I come across any passage that causes excitement, either by way of pleasure, pathos, or annoyance, I instantly lose that feeling of rest. To me, philosophy is the most restful kind of reading, and poetry the most soothing, if it is not too personal and pathetic. Biography too is restful —if there was not much misery in the life it depicts. History has a grand restfulness alongside its majestic waves of the collective emotions of restless humanity rolling on to the shores of the Present from the dim regions of the Past. It has the restfulness of the rhythmic sound of ocean heard at a distance,—indistinct yet continuous, and swelling ceaselessly with a deep, grand harmony. Novels are morbidly exciting though often petty; and their pathos too is disturbing. Oratorical flourishes of trumpets and drum-beats do not appeal to me at all; there is always a disturbing element in them; they are too stagey and too political as a rule, and rarely have any permanent value. They were meant for the occasion, and designed to produce an effect on the audience at the moment, and having done this duty they become *defunct* —except those portions in which some grand sentiment or some abiding truth has been embodied.

* * *

Inner and Outer World

Man's life—the interaction of internal and external forces—has created this complex structure, our world and our civilization. There is much in it that is accidental, much that has become conventional, much that is now useless; yet we cling to it, as though it were necessary to our being. Is it from habit, is it from following the lead given by others, or is it from a belief that no other mode of existence is now possible for us, that we cannot get out of the old groove? It probably is so with the mass of humanity whose habits and ways of thought are, and must be, gregarious. But what about individual life, so far as its own independent, imaginative will is concerned? Can it not shape its own world from within and conform every action to it? What have the great men of the past done? Have they been content merely to live in the man-made world around them like common beings, or have they in their inner lives broken down all the barriers set up by folly or by chance, by superstition or by prejudice and, constantly widening the bounds of their own world, lived above the level of common humanity? The internal forces can overcome the external. Such is the history of great souls.

* * *

Transition to the Eternal

Are we not in a state of transition? The whole world around us is in a state of transition,

and perhaps the whole universe. Does transition merely mean passing from one state to another, implying merely a change of outward form? Or does it imply in our case a deeper change, a gradual growth or evolution from within, a growth and development of the spirit striving towards a better condition? If so, what importance ought we to attach to mere outward developments: to institutions, for example, and to the whole machinery of our Civilization? Perhaps this is the test: Do they or do they not supply the real needs of our real self? Are they indispensable for our self-development and evolution along the right path?

But what is the right path? That which leads to the attainment of the fullest growth of which our soul is capable by the exercise of its best faculties in their highest and purest moral activities. This should be our aim in our present life, and the attempt ought to be made here and now. We cannot discard or disown our material surroundings while we are here in their midst. We have to work with them and through them in order to rise from the material and the finite towards the eternal and divine.

* * *

Self-denial

Self-denial has its compensations. When one denies oneself something, is it not, generally, for the purpose of gaining something else? Even if such a direct purpose be absent, does not some

kind of pleasure or satisfaction arising from the act of self-denial itself compensate us for it? The greater the self-denial or the self-sacrifice, the greater is the satisfaction. At least, it ought to be so for all properly-constituted and properly trained minds. When a man rises above his ordinary self to the height of the heroic to face a situation that demands the greatest sacrifice he can make—of property or of life itself—there must be present in the depths of his soul all the grim yet sublime satisfaction of a noble tragedy! He must feel that by sacrificing his all in this outer world of circumstance and accident, he is coming into his own, and will enter God's Kingdom. The approach to that Kingdom lies often through a desolate tract, and at its frontier life's values change: gold becomes dross, and dross, gold; all that was real before becomes unreal, and all that is thought to be unreal by the worldly suddenly becomes Reality!

* * *

Freedom

We wish to be free, but are we ever free? It is easy enough to be free from others' restraint, but what about the tyranny of our own desires and passions? And why do we resent others' interference with our liberty of movement and action even though it be for our good? Is it not merely or chiefly because it prevents us from indulging our own desires unrestrained, whether those desires be good or bad? Ordinarily, our

desire to be free is no more than the natural instinct of the animal within us to escape! But we cannot afford to let it escape; we must manage it with tact and prudence, and guide it to its proper destination—freedom of the mind with serenity of the soul. And this can be gained if the demands of the body be not given undue prominence. We often wish to get away from our present surroundings, from the demands others make upon our time and our energies, from the irritating interruption to which social life is liable, and from the vexatious importunity of selfish people seeking favours or assistance. But we have to bear all these with patience. When we get impatient we are weak, because we allow the occasion to master us. Impatience does not make us free. Only self-mastery can give us true freedom.

* * *

Self-respect

What is self-respect? Does it not imply something higher than mere respectability? Something more satisfying than the respect actually paid to us by others on account of our status, position, power, influence, wealth? To be respected by others on worldly considerations is easy enough; but to be worthy of being truly respected is not quite so easy. And to be able to respect oneself is the most difficult of all. It requires not merely complete impartiality in self-judgment, and complete detachment, but,

what is more difficult to attain, a modest consciousness of always trying one's utmost to do right and to avoid wrong. Together with this, a certain sensitiveness on points of honour is needed; a sensitiveness that can tacitly but courageously repel any assault upon one's honour. This kind of sensitiveness is possible only to those who would rather die than barter away their honour. A man who is self-seeking, who is always aiming at getting worldly advantages from those in authority, or something from those who have the power of bestowing favours, cannot have it. Such a man is not capable of self-respect however high he may hold his head. If he feels degraded *within himself*, he modestly accepts that degradation and again puts forth his hand!

* * *

Hatred

Hatred is a feeling difficult to understand, and I am glad I have never been able to understand it. Anger that can in a sudden blaze cause hurt to others I can understand; contempt and loathing for what is despicable and loathsome, irrepressible moral indignation, or even a feeling of just vengeance I can understand; but hatred as a blind, overpowering, malicious desire to cause injury to another is fortunately beyond my understanding. Dr. Johnson is said to have loved a good hater. I do not believe he did, or that he could. He was a moral man; he could not possibly approve of a feeling intrinsically

immoral and evil, and therefore unworthy of a moral being. What he meant was probably nothing more than moral indignation avowedly punitive and emphatically expressed. A good hater then, in his sense of the word, is no more than a good fighter—a hard hitter; not one that harbours malice and plans vengeance. Dr. Johnson's good hater may occasionally be somewhat of a bully, but he can never be a sneak; there may be fire in his heart, but poison, never. Only mean natures are capable of hatred.

* * *

Life is Labour

Life is labour; we must be doing something or we cease to be. This impulse to work is from within; it is the principle of growth in the ever-active energy called life. And yet how we long for rest at times!

Our dreams of peace—of perfect, everlasting peace—must be a kind of necessary reaction of the soul. But if we had our wish and found that peace, we should be longing for some sort of activity again. Perhaps even in Heaven the soul will go on energizing, expanding, and growing from height to height.

"..... The energy of life, may be
Kept up after the grave, but not begun;
And he who flagg'd not in the earthly strife,
From strength to strength advancing, only he,—
His soul well-knit, and all his battles won,—
Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life."

Why should not such progress be eternal? But then, what about Perfection, which we take to be the End? Perfection is like the horizon; it is always before us but we cannot reach it. It would not be perfection if it were ever reached. It would then be condemned as "not quite satisfactory" and left behind in our quest of something better!

* * *

Freedom from Perturbation

Philosophers teach us that nothing should be allowed to cause us perturbation. We take this lesson to heart only when we realise that nothing will last. Whatever causes the sensation of pleasure and pain in us is temporary; it is a state that is passing just as we ourselves are passing through life. Life's journey has its comforts and discomforts; why grumble, why excite ourselves, why mourn the loss of any of our luggage? Why not take all that comes, calmly contentedly, cheerfully? Our life in this world is a compound of pain and pleasure, of good and evil; but it is what God has made it. Look at it in ill humour, it becomes foul; look at it in good humour, it becomes fair. Yes, foul and fair it is, yet it is God-made—and ours!

* * *

Our Well-being

Wealth which means the state of weal or well-being, is often taken in the restricted sense of

riches. We use it in a banker's sense—in a tradesman's sense, but seldom in a good man's sense. This is because money, mere medium of exchange, has become all-important to us and reigns supreme over all our thoughts and feelings. All the energies of our soul have come to be expressed in terms of money! One cannot imagine a greater degradation, a greater humiliation for the soul, than this. The real needs of life are very few and simple, and our true well-being depends upon right thinking and right-feeling, and in keeping the soul above all those temptations to which the unguarded mind is liable. It depends on our capacity to take from Nature around us all the suggestions of beauty and goodness it can afford, feeling ourselves to be a part of the great universe of God and related to all that is in it, and drawing into ourselves all that is best in the unseen mighty forces which are forming and shaping it and directing it on its eternal course. This is the wealth, the true well-being our soul requires.

* * *

Success

What is success for a moral being? Is it merely the achievement that counts, or the moral force behind it? Some men may be disposed to admire successful villainy; but can the right-minded man approve of it? Is it not more admirable to fail after endeavouring to achieve a good object than to succeed in a bad one? Success does not always justify the means employed.

It only indemnifies the perpetrator of evil for a time, and that too merely so far as the opinion of some of his contemporaries is concerned. The successful bad man is admired as being clever and able, and if in a position to dole out small favours to his adherents, he gathers round himself a circle of admirers who will not examine the moral value of his deeds. A gang of thieves following a resolute and successful leader may be transformed into a conquering host led by a hero on the path of glory! Not an uncommon miracle in history. But what is the value of it to the world?

* * *

Seeking Refuge from Evil

From the suggestions of the Evil One, we are to seek refuge with the Source of all Goodness. We are taught to pray in this way, and our lips utter the formula from day to day; but how many of us are there who really seek that refuge? How many of us who do not keep a secret place in our hearts for the Evil One? As a prince in one of Shakespeare's plays boasted that he could send the murderous Machiavel to school, so some of us can give lessons in evil-doing to the Evil One himself! We come across persons whose fair exterior conceals much that is foul within. They are exponents of the purest ethics and perpetrators of the foulest deeds. They too, no doubt, as a matter of routine, pray for refuge from the suggestions of the Evil One!

Why do we not think and feel the prayers we utter? Is it because we are taught to pray in a foreign language and the spirit of the prayer does not enter our souls? I often wonder which is better and more efficacious—to attain to morality through religious instruction or to reach the true meaning of religion through our moral instinct properly trained?

* * *

Love of Our Kind

To love our fellow-beings seems a difficult virtue—especially when we consider what some of our fellow-beings are thinking and saying and doing. Their follies and crimes we cannot overlook, the impurity of their minds we cannot forget, yet we must not allow our dislike of these qualities to harden our hearts against them. By loving them is meant showing them some sympathy, making allowances for their shortcomings, having in our hearts forgiveness for them if they injure us, and being willing to help them in every just way. Love here means a large charity, a wide sympathy which no personal consideration of right and wrong should be allowed to diminish. We must not think of the individual's faults, but of his being one of our own kind—an erring mortal like us, needing sympathy and guidance. Even when he injures us, we must remember that he is a brother. His actions may be hateful to us, but his life, such as it is, is a part of the Universal Scheme, of which "he" is one unit and "I" another. If, by his

vices or follies, he should cause disturbance in some remote corner of that scheme, am I to retaliate and increase the disturbance, or is it for me to allay it so far as I may be able? By resenting injuries, by retaliating, by hating our fellowmen, by getting angry with them, by withholding our sympathy or pity from them, we only injure the best principles of our own nature, and thus denaturalize ourselves. !

"The best revenge is not to imitate the aggressor," said Marcus Aurelius. A fine observation !

* * *

Foul Mind

It seems at times as though man was the most foul-minded animal in creation. His mind seems to have a marvellous capacity for generating vice and filth in itself,—and flinging it on to others! Side by side with this, however, is his inherent propensity to virtue. A struggle between the two tendencies is always going on within, and we begin to feel it in ourselves almost from our earliest consciousness. Sometimes the one, sometimes the other predominates ; and it is by the balance on the one side or the other that we are ultimately to be judged. Happy are those who, conscious of the struggle, are moving in the direction their better nature guides them, and unhappy those who, always giving in to their evil tendencies, are being dragged down lower and lower. Most of us are weak and yield to

our worse nature, but those alone are to be condemned who deliberately choose the evil path because some pleasure or gratification lies that way; and worst of all are those who choose evil for its own sake, proving thereby that their own nature is inherently evil.

* * *

Sympathy in Judging Others

How often do we condemn in others the faults we are ever ready to condone in ourselves! It is good sometimes to get out of our own skin and get into that of another and see and feel things as he does. It would be safer to judge him after that, for we should then be in a better position to apply our moral standard with something more of human sympathy, as we do in our own case with unavoidable partiality.

It is much easier to judge and condemn our fellow-beings than to feel for them; we should therefore first feel for them, pity them, and then condemn them—as parents do in the case of their children. Even our just moral indignation sometimes carries us too far, and is apt to harden into cruelty if we once empty our hearts of sympathy. Let our moral indignation be like the stone jar in which some precious healing unguent is preserved!

* * *

Clean Heart

The most important thing in the life of a moral being is to keep the heart clean, so as to

prevent the soul from being stained with foul blots. If the soul is going to have an eternal existence as an individual soul retaining some marks of the thoughts and passions by which it was swayed during earthly life, it will probably carry with it some of the stains contracted during that life and will be made miserable by their presence. This, in brief, is the philosophic conception of Hell, and both religion and philosophy point to the same result, which our common-sense readily accepts.

We have been told by the saints and the sages and the philosophers and the poets of the world that we must control our passions; and our own experience teaches us that unless we do this we are no better than well-dressed savages or perhaps worse, being hypocritical: fair without, and foul within! Divested of his robes of outward decency, the naked animal within us is something shocking to look at; and in some cases he is scarcely human! while all the appetites of the brute are present in him, he would be acting his foul part, not with the innocent instinct of the brute, but with the full consent and co-operation of a guilty human intellect. This is Vice, from which the innocent brute is free, and it leaves its stain upon the soul.

* * *

Selfishness not the Sole Motive of Action

Selfishness is not the sole motive of human action. Some consideration that relates to self

in some way or other may be lurking in the dim recesses of the mind, but it cannot in all cases be regarded as a motive. The good actions of good men must be attended by a feeling of pleasure—a pure sense of gratification; and there may be an anticipation of it before the action is begun. But it would be wrong to call this a form of selfishness, if by selfishness is implied a disregard of the interests of others. If, to do good to others, is selfish even though there be some risk of injuring one's own interests thereby, then it is selfish to act contrary to one's own interests! Let people argue till they are tired, but let us follow our own way and do all that our own conscience approves of. Do what we may, people will find fault, and some will criticise in order to be thought clever! Let us be sincere to ourselves and to others, and we cannot go wrong.

* * *

Discontent

A discontented mind cannot be happy; nor can it be grateful for God's bounty. It will always be wanting, and always repining. Instead of comparing its own lot favourably with that of millions of human beings, it will be comparing it unfavourably with that of a few whom it considers more favoured by Providence. It will thus miss all that is good in life, for nothing will appear good to it. It will not be satisfied with what it has or what it can get, because it will never be enough. Those who prate of "divine discontent" are people who

want to pose as leaders and reformers to "uplift" poor humanity. In some cases they are pseudo-philosophers, politically-minded, who want to sell their tinsel to a credulous mob.

Contentment is not opposed to progress or reform, and does not mean an acquiescence in the evils that exist. In relation to social or political conditions, an ambiguous use of the word has led to a misconception of its meaning and true application.

Contentment is divine. Look round the Universe, and you feel it; take it into your soul, and you can become divine as soon as you obtain the freedom of God's Universe!

Only a contented man can be free and strong.

* * *

Wise Living True Philosophy

Wise living is true philosophy. It does not help us much to follow "schools of thought" and to study "systems." We cannot live on metaphysics; we cannot and we need not all become "professors" of philosophy. Indeed we need profess nothing, but go on living the right kind of life. Socrates did not profess to know anything; on the contrary he protested that he knew nothing. Yet he knew the most important of all things: how to live like a true man; how to feel himself a part of the great God-made scheme of things, acting under orders from God! His Daimon—guiding conscience,

inspiration, or whatever it was—made him see and feel truth in a manner that was unknown to Greece before. It brought him knowledge unattainable by Reason. Every one of us has that power within, hidden away in some dark corner of the Subconscious. In order to live wisely, we have to discover and develop it.

* * *

Memory

As one grows older, one feels that memory must be a necessary condition of the soul's immortality. Without it there would be no continuity of consciousness ; and if the soul survived without memory, its life would be in separate sections, and thus its individuality would be lost. Then how about purgation and advance towards 'perfection'? How about Heaven and Hell—whether we take them in the religious sense or regard them as pleasant or painful states of consciousness? Unless the soul carried with it memories of its past, how could it desire to become purer and more perfect? Unless it carried some reminiscent stains on its purity, received in an anterior stage of existence, how could it wish to be rid of them? Consider what happens to us in our daily life on earth. We recall past errors, repent, and wish to retrieve them. Why should the same process not continue when the soul goes elsewhere? One cannot think of the soul living and energising merely in order to work like a machine, or like a wheel whirling round in empty space and covering no ground. Such reflections

compel a sort of belief, and it satisfies our innate sense of justice to admit that Memory will reward or punish us in a future existence as it often does in this.

* * *

Using our Good Impulses

If we would only make proper use of our good impulses, how easily we might neutralise our bad ones! But where do our good and bad impulses come from?

Heredity? Environment and Association? Individual propensity?

Perhaps a combination of all these, and education ought to take all of them into account. Home education of children, which begins at the age of six months, is the most important of all—and the most neglected among us. As soon as the child begins to observe and understand things, its education should be directed with care, its movements watched, its inclinations observed and understood. This can be done best by the mother; but the father and all the relatives ought to take part in it as a matter of human duty. The greatest good one human being can do to another is to guide his impulses in the right direction. This duty is quasi-divine! Neither Ethics nor Religion aims at doing more than this.

* * *

Perpetual Change

We are changing, and everything around us is changing. Is there anything permanent in Nature besides its creative activity which is working through constantly changing forms? These forms are made and shaped again into new ones. Their outside wears out, but the force within remains unchanged. It is not wasted or destroyed, for it is, and must continue to be, for ever a part of the Whole of Nature, a part of the Universal Soul. How satisfying it is to feel that while the outer shell confining our spirit is gradually decaying and will soon fall off, the spirit within is growing proportionately stronger and more beautiful and more free! This is the hopeful message that old age brings, and we feel consoled by it:—"The spirit never dies; death only means a change of form."

* * *

Prayers

Some believe in the efficacy of prayers, others do not. But it is curious how those, who have faith, often find their prayers granted! We do not know how this happens, but it does. We believe in our own will-power in worldly affairs, and our whole civilization is the outcome of it. May we not then believe that the will-force of a pure and sincere soul can sometimes put into operation, in an unknown manner, certain other impalpable spiritual forces in Nature? In the world of external Nature we are so used to perceiving

things in their grossly physical form, that we cannot readily understand the existence and operation of invisible spirit-forces acting in an unknown subtle manner on physical material. But our present-day knowledge is leading us in this direction. Some of the rays of the Sun's light are so potent as to penetrate dense masses of matter. We can wirelessly set into motion gigantic forces through large tracts of space without apparently stirring even a breath of air! We have thus got to know a little about some of the forces of Nature—a few of the active agents of the Soul-will of the Universe. Are we not a part of that soul? May not our will be a part of that will and allowed to act in conjunction with those other agents in some mysterious way? Some day we shall know; but let us have faith meanwhile, for faith is strength, and let us continue to pray that the world may be made better.

* * *

Our Wants and Wishes

Our real wants are few, but our wishes are many, and they create secondary wants. And what an amazing web we weave around our souls with these wants and wishes of ours! To think that all this motley world with its boasted 'civilization' has thus grown, a huge excrescence, around a few simple primitive needs! Was it the human soul's mission to do this, or is it the result of a long-continued series of accidents? And is all this necessary for our

real selves? I doubt it. But the difficulty is to unbuild the edifice now. And it is hardly possible all of a sudden to get our mind out of the groove of custom.

The socialist makes spasmodic attempts to free himself from some of the old conventions, but his field is narrow. He approaches his task from the economic side—and fails. The approach has to be made from the moral side in order to succeed—as Islam succeeded in the earlier period of its history. Each one of us has this mission to fulfil, and each should begin with himself. Let us begin the work at once by throwing some of our useless luggage overboard!

* * *

Duty

It is possible for a man to do his duty, whatever his position in life may be. It is not the scope of his work, nor its opportunities, nor the pomp and circumstance surrounding it that is essential, but the compelling impulse from within to do what is due to one's own sense of right and to others' claim upon it. This alone may not make a man great, but it can make him good. It is not in one's own power to be great, but it is in one's power to be good. Nelson was not the only man who felt the call of duty, nor is England the only country that expects every man to do it. Every man in doing his duty can be a Nelson; his place in life, however humble, can be the deck of his Victory! The call he hears is not the

voice of his country alone, but the voice of the whole Universe around him. Only, he must make himself capable of hearing it!

* * *

Conflict of Higher and Lower Nature

In all our actions, and in almost all our thoughts and feelings we find traces of our native clay; but the instinct of the soul is to soar. Earthborn we are and through earth lies our way to heaven, and we have to work out our salvation here and now. The spirit has to evolve itself out of the flesh, working through the flesh. Any event of the flesh affecting our emotions, and through them the mind, has a moral and, ultimately, a spiritual significance. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance to train the mind not to be affected improperly by such events. If there is a physical instinct in our nature, there is also a moral instinct in it, and the highest function of the mind is to use it to help and not retard the evolution of self in such a way as to bring out the best that is in man. Religion and philosophy both aim at this, and the heart of the true philosopher venerates religion as being the more potent force to achieve this object. It regards prayer as the ardent desire of the soul to purify itself and rise towards heavenliness. Socrates, the greatest seeker of truth in the best days of Greece, was sincerely religious at heart and used to pray for guidance from above.

* * *

Rectitude or Popularity

Is it possible for us always to do what we consider right, regardless of the wishes of others, and yet be popular? Which is better and more befitting a moral being—to do the right thing or to compromise with his conscience in order to gain popularity? And popularity for what? Surely it is not merely for the purpose of being liked (or loved) by their fellow-beings that people court popularity; it is rather for some good to be gained for themselves by means of it! This sounds cynical—but is it not true? Leave aside those who want to be popular for some end of their own, and take the case of a real lover of his kind who wants to be loved by his fellow-beings for love's sake. Could such a man, were he a saint, always do the right thing without disobliging some person or persons? Our duty is not merely to do what pleases others, but to do that which can do good to others in a higher and wider sense. Personal favours please persons, but favour to one may mean disfavour to another where rights are involved. A sense of right, justice, impartiality, and willingness to accept unpopularity are better and more whole, some qualities in human dealings than the weak selfish, and often mercenary desire to be popular.

* * *

Soul Imprints of Man's Work

How the human spirit can imprint itself upon time! Even when its visible symbols are decayed, and its achievements, in the shape of kingdoms, cities, monuments, have disappeared,

something intangible and imperceptible still remains, permeating human life and human thought for all time—some force that subtly mingles with the forces within us, presenting visions to our mind and directing our course towards them. The invisible thread running through them gives us some idea of the continuity of the human mind and spirit. It runs through centuries, as we count centuries by our knowledge of some of the known events of history, but it must have been running through æons before that and will run on for æons after that into Eternity. When we have passed out of the prison-house of our five senses and acquired unlimited perception, then perhaps we shall see the whole of the vast spirit-world of God's universe as a scroll spread out before us!

Wholesome Pride of Principle

Consistently to follow high principles in the conduct of life is an unfailing source of satisfaction. It should be a source of wholesome pride too—a pride that can save the mind from the snares of vanity. Vanity makes us seek many things unnecessary in themselves but desired on account of their conventional advantages. Their value depends upon their associations, and these associations derive their force from the opinion of other people. In this way we have to suspend or surrender our independent judgment till we lose sight of those principles by which alone we ought to be guided.

In order to preserve our freedom, a certain amount of simple healthy pride is necessary, and

this kind of pride has to be supported in its turn by certain principles. The two are interdependent and must be maintained for mutual reinforcement. Take for example, the case of a poor but honest man. He feels a pride in his poverty because he is honest and wishes to remain so; and he remains honest because his pride saves him from being dishonest. It comes to his aid when he wavers, and assures him that he is better than those who become dishonest in thought, word or action for the sake of some worldly advantage.

Independence and Freedom

Every man desires independence and freedom, but he seldom considers how these are to be attained. The common mind associates them with the possession of worldly goods and the absence of extraneous control. The philosopher takes them to mean disregard of all extraneous circumstance in order to preserve the serenity of the self-dependent mind. And he who can attain that "marmoreal calm" of the soul contemplated by Plato is indeed blest. Men who have to live and work in the ordinary everyday world of crude morals and selfish endeavours cannot utterly disregard these insistent facts surrounding their lives. But they must be taught to make use of them in such a way as to be able to rise above them in their inner consciousness. Rank, wealth, office, honours, dignities—to mention only a few—are a part of the great Show, and their importance, so far as they are useful in the Show, is merely relative. They subserve

some ulterior purpose, and that purpose itself subserves another—and so on until we get to the great Beyond! To make proper use of all the paraphernalia of modern life, and at the same time to despise it in one's heart as dust to be shaken off our person sooner or later, is not to be cynical but religious.

* * *

Life's Journey and Guidance from Great Souls

If we lose our way in life, it is not for want of guidance; for the great souls of the past stand out as lights along our way. Their way is before us, and it should be our way. They have made it straight and broad and smooth for us, and it is easier for us to walk on than it was for them. They had found rocks and pits and thorns in it, which they removed for our benefit. The great Founder of Christianity, the great Prophet of Islam, the great Greek Prophet-philosopher, Socrates, are such shining lights to guide our souls to truth and purity. They can lead us along the path of self-perfecting humanity to the height of the divine. Not one of them but had to find the way for himself, and with no other guides but God and his own soul to lead him on. We too have God and our own soul, and we have other souls before us as examples. Is it so difficult for us then to live a good life even in the midst of the distractions of modern 'civilization' and its impurities? And is it right to allow those impurities to work their way

into our souls? The material of our civilization is useful in building the house we live in, but we are not obliged to let the mud and mortar and paint stick on our souls! Nor are we obliged to believe that this house is our only and permanent abode. It is merely a wayside inn as the Sufi poets have named it.

* * *

Living according to Nature

To live according to Nature. What does the expression signify; what ideas does it convey to us; what does it enjoin, and what does it forbid? Each one will interpret it after his own mental habits and predilections; and the man of the world will not take it to mean what the philosopher understands by it. The one class will not give up all their worldly connections and become hermits, nor will the other become thoroughgoing men of the world and abandon their higher aspirations. Then how is it possible to live according to Nature?

Living as simply as possible is a part of Nature's programme, as living in artificially created environment is man's; from which it may be inferred that living in a highly artificial manner is living unnaturally. But it may be pleaded that living according to *habit* is living according to our second nature; though this would be a mere quibble.

The essential wants of the body are but few—a little wholesome food, a few plain clean clothes,

and a clean place to live in. To feel the want of more than this denotes an unnatural disposition—unnatural according to our first nature, however natural it may seem according to the standard set up by our second nature. To want little; to be content and happy with that little; to restrain all vicious passions; to seek truth, beauty and purity in all our thoughts and actions; to find these in Nature and to take them into our own soul; to resign ourselves to the will of the Almighty when we find ourselves helpless against its mysterious operations; to bear pain with fortitude and not think it a calamity; and to think of death with a calm and almost cheerful feeling as something which must happen and which will release us—all this is a part of the programme of living according to Nature.

* * *

Philosophers must learn to Die

It was, I think, Socrates who said "The whole business of the life of a philosopher is to learn to die." And he proved by his noble and beautiful manner of dying how well he had learnt the lesson. I wonder if there is any other death on record so serene and so full of soothing satisfaction as his. To go to death as one goes to bed after a long day's hard work with a sense of satisfied craving and calm enjoyment, believing with all the assurance of faith that we shall waken in a happier world, is a sight for the gods. The Greek made Death beautiful. *Thanatos* (Death) was brother to *Morphos* (Sleep) and *Oneiros* (Dream). The

family likeness is apparent, and every mind instinctively compares death to sleep.

"But in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause."

True, but we have only to believe that the dreams will be happy, and we are rid of all fear; and if dreams are to come let us try and make them beautiful. The thoughts and feelings with which we have impregnated our minds in this life will be the material out of which our dreams hereafter will be fashioned. Pure and good thoughts will produce blissful dreams, and vicious thoughts, the opposite. Religion teaches us that each soul will gain hereafter what it has earned here, and that its fate will be in accordance with its deserts. The philosophy of Socrates taught him the same lesson and enabled him to say just before he drank the poison: "Everyone who during his life-time renounced the pleasures of the body, who looked upon the appurtenances of the body as foreign ornaments, and siding with the contrary party, pursued only the pleasures of true knowledge, and beautified his soul not with foreign ornaments but with those suitable to its nature, such as temperance, justice, fortitude, liberty and truth; —such a one, being firmly confident of the happiness of his soul, ought to wait peaceably for the hour of his removal, as being always ready for the voyage whenever his fate calls him." (Phædo, Dr. Johnson's translation). And again "Those who have distinguished themselves by

a holy life are released from these earthly places, these horrible prisons (referring to Tartarus) and received above into that pure earth where they dwell; and those of them who are sufficiently purged by philosophy live for ever without their body, and are received into yet more admirable and delicious mansions, which I cannot easily describe....."

The dying Socrates said about one of his companions "He confounds me with my corpse, and in that view asks me how I must be buried," then addressing all, "As soon as I shall have taken down the poison I shall stay no longer with you, but shall part from hence, and go to enjoy the *felicity of the blessed.*"

This is how a philosopher, a practical lover of wisdom, not only learns but teaches how to die, and the contemplation of such a scene guides our souls to Heaven!

* * *

Life's Petty Worries

The petty worries of everyday life are often more trying to the temper than great calamities. One can by an effort brace oneself to meet the latter when they come, but there is no protection against the frequent irritation caused by the former as by dust blown from all sides into one's eyes and nose. Interruptions in one's mental occupation, whether they are caused by untimely visitors or by the exigencies of business, are the

more distasteful because they seem to cause a painful break in the continuity of one's thought and existence. And those who are used to living much in their own thoughts, or in the best thoughts of other minds to be found in books, are the greatest sufferers when such a break occurs. There are some who never get used to interruptions because they are not able to break the habit of retiring into themselves either with books or alone. They can never fancy themselves in the role of small retail dealers who patiently sit in their little shops ever at the beck and call of every chance customer. Such a dealer has to be patient and of an equable temper, bland and obliging in his manner with a certain ingratiating subservience in order to get customers. Such are those who, trying to please the world, are tempted to do much that is unworthy—the seekers after popularity.

* * *

Value of Time

The value of everything in this life depends on time. There are many things that have no intrinsic value but which we prize because we derive some benefit or enjoyment from them during a brief space of time: such as money and position. These have value only in relation to our surroundings, and would cease to have any if those surroundings were changed. Would money be of any value to a man who could not make use of it? Could his position in life be

of any use to a dying man? We all are dying men and nearing the certain end day by day, and thus passing out of our present surroundings. Hence the value of worldly advantages is constantly changing and decreasing for us. What was desirable and keenly desired a few years ago is less desirable and less desired by us now. As we leave behind forty or fifty years of desires and expectations, so we also leave behind most of those expectations and desires. Those fulfilled have been satisfied and are therefore obsolete; those unfulfilled have died a natural death. Whatever of life remains is, or ought to be, concerned with things of permanent value,—thoughts and emotions which will go along with the soul as its matured and purified energies.

* * *

Honesty the Best Policy

"Honesty is the best policy." This is one of the wisest sayings because it is one of the wisest maxims of human conduct. Taking policy in the widest sense, it holds good in all human relations. Policy here does not mean the calculated adjustment of means to ends; it means the general course of conduct; and honesty is nothing else but a compound of truth, sincerity and good intentions. All human relations must ultimately rest on these moral principles, if man is a moral being possessing a conscience to enable him to distinguish between right and wrong. An inner sense is always indicating to him the right path; the direction given may be vague and at times

unintelligible; but it is seldom or never absent even in the dullest or the most depraved nature. It is a sense that develops by use and becomes increasingly more sensitive and more peremptory in its mandates. Even in a selfish, unprincipled man it works as a guide, though seldom allowed to have its way.

To be honest in the fullest sense of the word is to prefer what is right to what is expedient; to do to others what we would wish others to do to us; to live in harmony with others; not to allow our interests to come into conflict with those of other people; and to do good to all men in an honest way. This is doing good to our own soul, and the best process of its purification.

* * *

Obsessions

Everyone of us has his own obsessions. There are some fixed ideas or some fixed feelings by which he is controlled and guided. They may be good or they may be bad; and in some cases they are of a mixed nature. If, as is often the case, any such compulsive ideas acquired from our surroundings are engrafted on innate impulses or predisposition, they become all-powerful and dominate all our actions. And it cannot be denied that our inborn tendencies draw from environments, as plants do, that alone which can nourish and satisfy them. This process of instinctive selection goes on through life; it commences in early infancy and continues till the

end of the mind's period of growth. To examine one's characteristic feelings or tastes or beliefs it is necessary to look down into one's heart for the proper clue, environment alone not being a sufficient explanation. Peculiarities, of which one may or may not be conscious. are not the growth of a single day. They may have grown and developed by the aid of circumstances, but they were not forced in from without. It would be far more true to say that innate tendencies gather strength through life and keep selecting and absorbing congenial material from their surroundings. Even from books we derive only such real knowledge as has affinity with our disposition, and the greater the affinity the easier and more gratifying is the process of absorption. Is our feeling for the heroic, the grand, the beautiful, merely a cult, or does its origin lie in the unexplored depths of our nature? Are these "obsessions" mere extraneous influences? Their source lies deeper.

* * *

Forbearance

Forbearance deserves to be ranked as a virtue. It is allied to patience and generosity and implies forgiveness. It is the attribute of a noble mind and a large heart. It flows from an equable disposition, which it nourishes and strengthens. It maintains harmony in human relations and thus makes the work of humanity easier for us to accomplish. It is essentially a human quality. Yet how often do we forget all this in our relations with our fellow-beings and

are hurried into an imprudent display of temper through irritation or resentment! There may be no malice in such conduct, but it is unseemly all the same. It may well be some unreasonableness on the part of others that gives the provocation, but is it not our duty to our own better nature to show patience? The noblest of mankind were those who could show the greatest forbearance in the most trying circumstances of life, and they have left us examples which we cannot ignore with impunity. Let us never forget that a few moments' forbearance will just give us the time required to recall and put into action our better qualities and thus save ourselves.

* * *

How to keep the Soul Undefiled

The greatest and most difficult problem of life is, how to keep the soul undefiled amidst earthly surroundings. We think of this less often than of the so-called struggle for existence, for we believe that the only problem before us is how to earn a living, and how to make ourselves wealthy and powerful. We forget that worldly advantages are not an end in themselves but only a means to an end, and only useful, in our period of probation, for testing our real merits. If Nature has implanted a desire in our hearts which such things are to gratify, it is for some purpose, and the things themselves are for use, but we have to use them with proper care, and in such a way as not to make our souls slaves to them.

In the course of half a century or more we have to pass through much that is apt to make our hearts unclean, but if we allow ourselves to be defiled, we are lost, however grand our outside may appear to our own and to others' ignorant admiration. Gilded tombs: marble and gold without, corruption within!

The soul must not be tainted by what it touches, and to prevent this is in the power of our own will. Who could hope to achieve greater power and glory than the four great Caliphs of Islam? Yet with all their power and glory they did not degenerate into mere worldly monarchs. They did not sit on a throne, but on the bare steps of the mosque, where power and grandeur crouched at their feet. The spoils of conquered kingdoms lay before their eyes as so much gilded dust which their souls never stooped to claim as their own. Can their followers afford to forget this?

* * *

Imitation

The weak love to imitate the strong; and imitation is a kind of homage, an acknowledgment of another's superiority. It must be instinctive in man, since it is seen in the child. It is not only the individual that comes under its influence, but aggregates of men, communities and nations seem to be drawn by its fascination. Manners, fashions, institutions (and constitutions) are begged, borrowed or stolen, if not for the very sake of imitation, at any rate for gaining

the real or imaginary superiority implied by it. Why does our young student affect English costume of the most advanced type and wear a soft felt-hat and go about perpetually holding a cigarette between his lips? Only to claim superiority over his compeers as being fashioned after the English model. Of course he does not like the British, but he likes British institutions, British ideas of Government, British platform methods and the latest British 'catchwords.'

Not only in politics, but in other spheres of activity we find the same influence at work. Half-educated minds seem to wander in a British-made world, the British trademark branded on their being! If they frankly acknowledged their indebtedness to Great Britain for what it has done for them, it would only be honest and gentlemanly on their part. But unfortunately, they do not see the position in this light.

We ought to behave not only like men but like gentlemen, and when we borrow anything from a friend or imitate his ways, let us not fail to acknowledge the loan and the favour it betokens. On the other hand, if we claim complete originality, let us show it by avoiding imitation. The wisdom or expediency of our present methods and tactics I can neither understand nor appreciate. I merely look at the morality of it all, and in this I am disappointed. I look for more refined ways, and I find none; at least I expect some occasion a display of good feeling, and none is shown by our people.

* * *

Even wise men are sometimes befooled by their own desires. Sages and philosophers too, are subject at times to the common weakness of mortality, and may be misled or enslaved by some tyrannical desire. But in their case it seldom happens that the desire that possesses the soul is of an evil nature; for it seldom relates to any of those objects which the worldly-wise aim at. It seldom has any connection with passions that dominate the minds of those whose pleasures in life consist of mere sensual enjoyment.

Desire often misleads the mind by supplying it with specious arguments in support of its own aims. It induces a mentality that imparts its own colour to the reasoning by which the mind is led in the direction of the result desired. Thus our desires befool us throughout life. But how to guard against this? How to escape the seduction of the senses? How to be proof against the witchery of seemingly beautiful ideas? This can be done, with some success, if we exercise strict vigilance over ourselves, watch the faintest movements or inclinations of the heart and the minutest processes of the mind to detect false or specious justifications, and if we allow, or rather encourage, the heart to be dominated by the desire of doing only what is right according to our conscience. Together with this there must be an unquestioning belief in the depths of the mind that our real wants are few and can be supplied

with the simplest means, and that our pleasures and our riches are all within us.

* * *

Loyalty

Loyalty to a person is in many cases loyalty to an idea. It is always so in the case of a person that is truly great, and it is generally so in the case of a person representing an office. Loyalty to a great leader is an instance of the first, and loyalty to a king of the second. Kingship, which originally was the leadership of the ablest man, having become an office, and in most cases a hereditary one, the feelings of obedience, attachment and devotion, which were at first entertained towards the strong leader, got transferred to the office held by him. In course of time when religion and chivalry contributed their support to him, his position became more exalted and he became in popular conception the 'God's anointed.' It took some centuries to reach this stage of apotheosis, and it has taken some centuries more to enable the human mind to free itself from that dogma. We now look upon kingship as a part (both useful and ornamental) of the constitutional machinery of a State. Since the termination of the Great War, some kings have fallen, but the idea of kingship has not fallen with them, and who can say whether it will ever die out? It is so natural for the mind to associate greatness with a single person rather than with an assemblage of persons. It is easier to love and admire one person, to revere and obey one

person, to give the entire devotion of one's heart to one person, and make that person stand forth as the embodiment of an idea to which time has given a special sanctity and the gorgeous scenes of history a glory and a grandeur of its own. It is not quite so easy to transfer this inborn feudal allegiance of the imagination and the heart to a few hundred worthy burgesses of all forms and shapes sitting (however solemnly) in a chamber. They may be very useful for deliberating and conducting the affairs of a nation; they too may have become time-honoured, and time may have brought within their reach that glorious prize called by a well known writer the "Omnipotence of Parliament," but they are a Corporation after all, (which according to an English Judge, has no soul) and which cannot possibly inspire the same self-sacrificing devotion and the same fervent loyalty as the magic word "King."

It must have been a glorious sight, indeed, to see those two miles of eager, impatient, beaming faces that cheered the king (George V) on his return to London after his recovery from a dangerous illness. The hearts belonging to those two miles of faces must be good kind hearts, full of pure natural emotions, everyone of them a throne for a king! It must have been a goodly sight. I see it at this distance of nearly seven thousand miles, and I see it in the dim light of bygone centuries. It opens up a gorgeous vista of triumphs commencing with the Conqueror embracing the sands at Hastings in 1066, and ending with King George's return to Buckingham

Palace in 1929. What picturesque pageants lie between these two remote dates and scenes! Whatever the trend of human thought in this advanced age, the pulse of the human heart is just the same as before. A comforting reflection.

* * *

Our Patrimony

The great deeds of the great men of the world are our patrimony and should be our inspiration. Conquerors of kingdoms and pioneers of empire, whose deeds have dazzled the world's eyes, have been great, but not so great as those humble workers who, by communicating a few simple and pure ideas and emotions to men's hearts, have helped to regenerate mankind. They were men like us, and many of them far poorer than we, but they never felt their poverty to be a curse as we do, because the resources they had within their own minds made them almost unconscious of the want of worldly means to which we attach so much importance. Yet their contact with the outside world was real and constant and effective, and they succeeded in bringing men's minds into touch with the unchanging reality of the life within. They made men realise that all their actions should be connected with, and influenced by the light of truth and faith that is in the heart. Those men can never die. Let them live enshrined in our souls so that we may walk with them through life.

* * *

Man a Political Animal

Man under our civilization tends to become a political animal on one side of his nature and a machine on another; but it is open to question whether he has ever regenerated himself or can regenerate himself solely by this means. By making himself a political machine, what is he striving to attain? Does he know his own mind? Has he become what he is from deliberate choice and conscious aim, or merely because in some countries the force of circumstances has driven him on to it, while in others the motive force has been no other than a blind imitation of the methods of foreign countries? Never has there been so much political vapour in the air, and there never has passed over the face of this earth so universal a tide of political unrest and turbulence as we have observed in these days.

"Lord! what fools these mortals be!" Puck's exclamation was a prophecy. Amelioration of the human lot? Perfection? Happiness? What else? Where did her politics lead Athens? What made Greece so great—her politics or her philosophy and literature and art? How far did her politics help Rome to become mistress of the world? What were the politics of Arabia when she rose from the desert to conquer the world? Was not England already great before party government came into existence? Did the England of Elizabeth, spacious and grand, owe its greatness to any politics-grinding machine? What of her Marlowes and Shakespeares and Bacons; her Raleighs and Drakes?

Let there be greatness in men's souls, and they will make their country great. Let them put forth their innermost best, whatever the form of it, and assert their own native genius and supremacy over the elements around them. This alone can make a nation great.

* * *

Depressing Environments

There is often a dearth of good thoughts in our minds. It is not that the fountain is dried up, but that the flow seems to become intermittent and scanty. There are so many petty details to worry us in the ordinary routine of life, so much dust and rubbish flying across the mirror of the mind that its vision of higher things may sometimes become, or seem to become, a little blurred. When one has to do with people who attach exaggerated importance to trifles and are indifferent to the real importance of affairs of higher moment, one becomes a prisoner as it were in a world of small false ideas. This causes a great strain upon one's mental and moral faculties and makes one impatient and fretful. Then there is association with people whose minds are receptive only of distorted ideas, who will not understand any plain truth, but must give it some imaginary monstrous shape in order to oppose it with vigour. Association with such does not make the course of life run smooth. Again, there are people who are always complaining of fate and begging small mercies with unwearying persistency—unwearying to them, but

most wearisome to others. Frequent contact with such not only depresses but debases the mind.

When forced to spend the hours of daylight in such company, far from books and far from unworldly thoughts, and far from the scenes of nature that inspire them, and totally deprived of that sweet solitude which can create its own paradise, it is no wonder that we feel tired and confused. But what is the remedy? Patience and sympathy to lead them to better ways, and an outlook beyond the present.

* * *

Good and Bad Thoughts

Good thoughts and bad thoughts, good impulses and bad impulses are equally the property of the mind. They come up from its unexplored depths spontaneously or at our bidding. In the former case our moral responsibility in using them is less than in those cases in which we deliberately bring them into play. When they suddenly surge up from within and take us by surprise and hurry us into action before we have time to reflect, we have some ground for excuse. But when we encourage and deliberately employ our vicious thoughts and impulses, whether for profit or for pleasure, we cannot hope to escape the censure of our moral judgment. This is the sad experience of those who have been given the power to judge and assess moral values. They are often the judge and the accused in one.

Leaving aside the extreme cases of perfect saints and perfect sinners, and of epicures either in sanctity or in villainy, we may take those common cases—our own, for example—in which may be perceived an occasional dalliance with questionable (if not impure) thoughts and passions. Some of these have such an insidious mode of approach that we scarcely know when and how they come; and till they have actually entangled our minds in their sinuous folds, we are scarcely aware of our condition. And we are utterly helpless when we have allowed our spirit to be infected by their breath till all its vigilant faculties are numbed. But the most culpable state of mind is a certain pleasure-yielding passivity that likes to flirt with vice. It is the more dangerous for being apparently temporary and harmless.

* * *

Good and Bad Thoughts—II

Each man's experience shows him that unless he keeps his mind occupied with good thoughts, evil thoughts will creep into it. It is also a well-known fact that once impure or evil thoughts effect an entrance into it, they deposit their larvæ there, which cannot easily be dislodged. In some cases the process of purification may extend over a whole life-time and prove ineffectual in the end. What are the possible means of prevention and of cure? In the case of boys and girls it is essential that their time should be well occupied with work and such recreations as can improve both body and mind. Besides this, the company of enlightened and pure-minded people, who have the

power of suggestion, is needed. The early moulding of the mind plays a large part in our later mental and moral career. The important thing is not to allow any vacant hours of idle reverie to the young mind, for though in some exceptional cases such reverie breeds high thoughts and noble sentiments and poetic impulse, yet in most cases it invites the powers of mischief to an At Home !

An old school friend of mine, who has become a hermit, told me the other day that there was a miraculous virtue in the repetition of certain holy texts, and explained how he had become converted from a profane disposition to a state of semi-sanctity by using this process. His remark set me thinking and I felt convinced by my own reasoning as above that there was a profound truth in his remark. The repetition of prayers, of holy texts, and of poems embodying high and holy thoughts or relating to noble deeds cannot but fill the mind with a sense of exaltation and purity. It is in some respects similar to the process of purification by gazing on the beauty and grandeur of Nature.

Man's Contribution

Every human being, however idle, contributes something to the visible or invisible world. The work he does in his life-time may be so little in itself and so little noticed by others that it may be thought to be nothing. But it is something in the sum-total of those life-activities which have filled the human world from its creation till

now, and are bringing it up to date. The life of every created being is a portion of the world-life at any given moment—a portion too, of the great scheme of Creation. The littleness of it does not matter, nor does the greatness of it either. From the Creator's point of view, the motive and the good-will or bad-will behind it, is the only thing that does matter. This human world consists of millions of invisible forces, for every deed and every thought leaves an invisible, indelible eternal mark somewhere on that infinite void which the scientific mind imagines to be filled with Ether and the philosophic mind with Being. Whenever I think a good or a bad thought in my own mind, however trivial, I set in motion an infinite series of thought-waves in that great void reaching from here and now to eternity! It is a stupendous, overpowering idea, and dreadful in its import, for it throws open the gates of heaven and hell.

* * *

Reconstructing History

There is hardly any other occupation so fascinating for the mind and so exalting for the spirit as the reconstruction, in one's imagination, of the life and deeds of a vanished race in a bygone age. Cities and kingdoms and empires, which have left no trace of their existence on earth and no visible symbols of their greatness, can be rehabilitated. Thrones and dominations, principalities and powers can be resurrected, and conquering hosts in their legions and phalanxes

can be paraded at will and put into action again. The palaces of kings, the temples of their gods, and the villas of their nobles can be brought before our eyes in all their pride. Gardens vying with those of the Hesperides can be made to bloom again, and kings and queens, and prophets and sages, and statesmen and great captains, names that conjure up phantoms of kingdoms and empires and conquest and glory,—can be made to move among them once more!

Going behind these gorgeous scenes into humbler regions, we can take part in the daily life of a dead people and see and understand the spirit-current of energy that runs through the whole phantasmagoria of historic pageant, directing into one unbroken stream all those activities the product and result of which is called Civilization. If history enables us to do this then alone does it fulfil its function; if not, it remains a lifeless schedule of isolated events. History must supply us with life-pictures and not merely with dead facts; and the true historian, who is not a mere scribe, must be an antiquarian in research, a poet in imagination, and a painter in words. But the reader must be his counterpart—his receiver,—and must respond to him in spirit with much the same qualities of mind and heart. Besides this he must be able at times to complete by the help of his own imagination the hurried sketches supplied by the historian.

We must not forget, however, that the reading of history books alone is not sufficient to enable us to reconstruct the past; history needs to be

supported and supplemented by art, in the shape of buildings, pictures and statues, and utensils; and by the writings of poets and annalists and imaginative authors. Our mind has to put together and arrange all such available material before it can shape, mould, and finish the pictures that it requires for its gratification.

* * *

Man proposes

"Man proposes, God disposes." A homely adage, full of the wisdom of faith. And is it not human experience? Some of us however, are disposed to believe in our own capacity and claim the entire merit of our successful actions. We are tempted to place ourselves first and give only the second place to God. 'Ego et Deus meus'—like the 'Ego et rex meus' of Wolsey!

The other day I came across a remark in a private letter written to a friend by a thoughtful young man. It was to the effect that one should rely on one's own efforts and not leave matters to providence. Is this not an illustration—one out of a thousand—of what an educated man is inclined to believe? Such a belief within certain limits is good and wholesome, for it gives a young man confidence in his own powers and makes him exert his own will, but if it substitutes the human will for God and eliminates all other influences, and even chance, from human affairs, it may mean only blindness and folly.

The Waterloo campaign resulted in disaster for Napoleon though the plan of the campaign was one of his masterpieces. The execution of details entrusted to his Marshalls did not come up to the expectation of the master; messages miscarried, or were misunderstood by his Marshalls and Generals; a heavy downpour, sudden and unforeseen, delayed cavalry action by nearly three hours—these are only a few out of the many mischances of those two disastrous days, and their result was Waterloo! European writers, who are as much inclined as any one can be to give the first place in the ordering of affairs to the human mind, have been taught by the disasters of Waterloo to admit the presence and the preponderating influence of other invisible forces in human affairs. "Fortune was against him," "fortune turned her face from him" and so on. What does it all mean?—only that God had disposed otherwise after all human efforts had been exhausted by the greatest captain of all time.

* * *

The Mind's Heaven

Tired of the wearisome routine of earthly life, the mind is apt to look towards heaven as a refuge; for heaven after all is the only place worth living in, and each mind has its own heaven. The heaven of religion is common to all, but there are other minor heavens more personal to the mind than that. As in the same house rooms are furnished differently to suit our different requirements, so in the same general heaven promised by

religion there must be different kinds of lodgings differently furnished for different minds. Omniscient justice cannot treat all alike eternally, for that would be ignoring personality altogether. A's mind and his habits in life are totally different from B's, and B's from C's, and so on. If their thumb-impressions are dissimilar, their mind-impressions are much more so, the intricacy and variety of shades of difference in this case being almost unimaginable. How could they then be lodged comfortably in the same place? If they were accommodated in the same mansion or garden, peace would have to be kept by some specially selected celestial police! If some of A's good friends (who are trying their very best to make his life uncomfortable here) were to be his neighbours in heaven, A would perhaps wish to go to the other place!

* * *

Nature

Look at Nature's face, and you look into her heart, and by looking into her heart you can reach God. You cannot see God except in his works, and His works are all around you. They are Nature, and in Nature everything is good and beautiful. If you see anything that is not good and beautiful, be sure it is your own blurred vision that makes it appear so. You see it in some one relation and not in all its relations; you see it in relation to your own conceptions, in relation to your own "surrounding circumstances" and you find fault with it from sheer ignorance.

Who made you Nature's judge or critic? Is it not your own presumption that does this? You have been made a fairly competent judge of the morality of your own actions and of the actions of beings like yourself, and no more; and even there your judgment is often at fault.

If you could take a stand outside the limitations of the human intellect and survey Creation from the point of view of the Creator, then you might profess ability to criticize and judge. Till then silent observation and adoration, love and worship!

* * *

The World is too much with Us

"The world is too much with us" complained the poet, and so it is; but it is in our power, if we have the will, to keep it at arm's length. If we run after it we have no right to complain of its intrusion, but if it runs after us, we have only to let it know that we are engaged, and then it must wait or come again. It will do so, for it will not go away for good. Treat it with ordinary politeness when it comes, but do not allow it to influence your judgment to the detriment of your higher concerns. If allowed to take liberties with your conscience, it will soon make you a convert, or a slave, and your worldliness will thrive in proportion to the decay of your spiritual nature.

To discharge worldly duties diligently, carefully and conscientiously is commendable, for it is in the proper discharge of these that our

moral and spiritual qualities are brought into play and put to the test; but we must not be so engrossed in the pursuit of worldly aims as to be unmindful of the mind's higher life and aspirations. The great men of the past lived in the world and yet above it. The greatest of them all used to spend his nights in prayers and meditation, and a portion of his days in discharging the menial duties of his household! In this way was he able to found a religion and build up a civilization! We have to serve the world, but we must not allow the service to degrade or enslave us.

* * *

Self-made Difficulties.

Many of our difficulties in life are of our own making, our desires and our temperament being mainly responsible for them. In our attempts to fulfil some foolish desire we come up against some conflicting principle or some interest opposed to ours, and in order to overcome such obstacles we resort to means suggested by our selfishness and supported by our time-serving intellect. Most of our actions are guided by our temperament. There are men whose peculiarities of intellect and temperament are such as to make the simplest affair a matter of serious controversy. One of the favourite tricks of such minds is first to distort and misrepresent the right thing to themselves and others in order to make it assailable, and then to compare it with their own proposal which is

made to appear superior and more reasonable. Such minds entangle themselves in their own meshes. If they would only follow the straight path and do the right thing in the first instance, all this trouble would be saved and life would be much happier and better spent. Both religion and morality teach us to choose the straight path; but we prefer to choose the most crooked. We are still in need of that higher education which can prevent the mind from stooping to what is false, selfish, or morally objectionable.

* * *

Man wants but little

"Man wants but little here below,
Nor wants that little long."

In order to have full faith in the wisdom of these lines one has to look upon oneself as, primarily, a soul. It is then only that the claims of the body will be subordinated to the higher demands of the soul. To keep the body alive and in reasonable comfort very little is required. Let every one of us examine his daily wants and see how little simple food, and how little space for the accommodation of the body, and how few clothes are required. We have seen some highly placed people using the comforts of life so sparingly as though they were hermits. They teach us more by their practice than sages have done by their words—or rather, they convince us that the sage's precepts are true.

An old school friend of mine has turned "fakir" after having served the State in various capacities. To look at him now one would think he was a common loafer of the servant class! His garments are simplicity itself, and not spotlessly clean; he has not a very inviting aspect; there is a wildness in his talk which is seldom coherent, and there is a strange light in his eyes. But with all this, we can see that he has got beyond our line of vision and has occasional glimpses of another world. If we analyse his case, it is no more than this: his soul has attempted to tear its way through the screen of the body into something beyond. Whether it has done this in the right way or not, it has done it—and that through an intense conviction of the utter unreality of our ordinary mode of life. This is a distinct gain.

Such a man proves, in however crude a manner, the supremacy of the soul over the body, and for this he is entitled to veneration. He leads the way upwards.

* * *

No Limit to Man's Folly

There is no limit to the folly of mankind. I am sure there is no other animal in creation that makes itself so absurd by its own conduct. To misuse ingenuity is one of man's mental peculiarities, and this induces him to choose various intricate ways for gaining his ends instead of following the straight path before him.

Some men are obsessed with the idea that simple straightforwardness can never lead to success. They are always trying to detect plots in the simplest transactions of life, and the result is that they are very often deceived when confronted with simplicity and straightforwardness, which, they suspect, must harbour some deep design. Probably there is a natural perversity in such minds, but in some cases there may be, in addition to this, the desire to be clever and skilful in unravelling mysteries, or the hope to avoid being deceived by the machinations of others. Such minds are never at their ease; they are ever imagining and detecting plots—or hatching them. They are ever restless and dissatisfied.

* * *

Self-contained Life

A self-contained life is essential to peace of mind. If the wants of the body are restricted and the wants of the mind made independent of external resources, peace of mind becomes attainable. Sympathetic interest in the affairs of our fellow-beings is not inconsistent with the aloofness of spirit here contemplated; nor does the idea of doing one's best to contribute to that welfare involve any contradiction. It is a mistake to think that we can do nothing for others unless our interest in their affairs becomes a kind of self-interest. I am afraid it is our own selfishness that begs the question. Real service to men is possible only when we achieve a certain aloofness of spirit and when our interest in them is no

longer a mere reflection of our own interest. It is only when we are aloof in spirit that we can be free from personal anxiety and therefore better able to serve others. And only then is it possible to attain a serenity of mind that nothing can disturb, and a faith in the ultimate good that providence has ordained for all.

Take the World's Great Men

It is marvellous how aloof in spirit they really were even in the busiest scenes of their lives. And the still greater wonder is, that in this respect prophets, sages and philosophers and world-conquerors were all alike. The great Prophet of Islam was busy the whole day with the big affairs of his mission and the small affairs of his family, but his soul, face to face with the immensity of creation and the beneficence and the omnipotence of God, was lapped in that perfect peace which is of heaven. Socrates, the fountain-head of ethical philosophy, could stand daily in the thick of the crowd in the market place at Athens talking about everything to every man while his soul was contemplating the divine power in Nature. That Socrates had fought as a foot soldier in two battles, and there amidst the carnage and the din of war his soul had retained its calm. The greatest warrior and statesman of modern times, Napoleon, was one of the busiest men the world has ever seen, the man who never lost sight of a single petty detail in the organization of an army or a State. He possessed in a supreme degree the faculty of aloofness, and an imperturbable serenity that at times seemed miraculous. He could enjoy

a twenty minutes' sleep on his bear skin while a battle was going on in front !

These instances prove that a certain exalted aloofness of mind, which is inseparable from serenity of soul, is possible even in the busiest scenes of life. But it is not possible if the mind is not self-contained and self-reliant; and if it is not capable of having absolute faith in the divine, whether in the shape of providence or of destiny.

* * *

The Inner Life and the Outer Life

Our inner life is a continuance of ideas and sentiments as our outer life is a continuance of facts and events, and it is the combination of the two that makes up our life in its entirety. In the majority of cases the life consisting of external events is accounted to be of the greater importance, and the world's judgment rests on it alone. But if we go deeper into the matter, we cannot help feeling that only those facts and events are of real importance which are outward manifestations of the inner movements of the mind and have a moral value. The man who does his work like a machine during ten hours out of the fourteen between dawn and sunset, without putting any more of himself into his work than hands and feet, may be admirable as a machine. His life is full of useful activity and full of facts, but his work cannot be said to be his life in the nobler sense of the word. The man whose daily (and nightly) work consists of nothing but absorbed

meditation, illumined by occasional glimpses into mystic regions, may be said to live the inner life of the soul as a saint; but he is not in touch with the life that has to be lived in the world of facts. Between these two extremes there lies a middle course and that we have to follow, who wish to live in such a way that the soul movements within us may guide us to the performance of all the ordinary functions of life, in constant and direct contact with the world of facts. To live at the same time in the world and above it, the bodily machine working below while the guiding spirit is in the ether above, to be able to see shafts of supernal light flashing down to penetrate the dense substance of mundane reality—this seems to be the ideal of all true philosophies and all true religions.

* * *

God in Nature

It is easier to find God in Nature than in a closed chamber. However absorbed and intense a hermit's devotion in his dark cell, it cannot have the same breadth and compass as the devotion of one whose spirit loves to dwell among the scenes of Nature where observation necessarily grows into worship. That worship is not of Nature itself, but of the Supreme Power that shaped Nature and robed it in eternal beauty and grandeur. The greatness and glory of God, which has become a formula of worship, is the outcome of observation and imagination.

The distance in creation between a little wild flower and a star appears infinite, but each is the manifestation of the same will and purpose, of which man rightly or wrongly presumes to make himself the interpreter. His interpretation may not touch the ultimate truth, but it helps him to satisfy the deepest yearnings and the highest aspirations of his own soul and fills him with the purest joy and gratitude. The scriptures of every religion, read in the light of Nature, become true revelation, whereas apart from it they remain mere words enshrining dogmas which narrow-minded priests have to explain to the uninitiated. Nature itself sufficiently explains its own mysteries and the power of God. It is our only true place of worship and our only house of God. Its foundation rests deep in this beautiful earth of ours and its roof is the blue sky studded with millions of stars. Let the soul but learn to claim it as its own, and it will then be in the presence of God.

* * *

Communication with the Spirit World

Some eminent men of science in these days are trying to prove that it is possible to establish communication with the spirit world: the very class of men who a few years ago would have laughed at the idea. This throws a curious light on the fact that the poor, ignorant, backward people of the East have always believed such contact to be, not only possible, but of frequent occurrence. And it further reveals the truth that in a case like this the distinction between the

possible and the impossible is only the result of certain misconceptions. Does not experience teach us that when a thing is believed to be possible, it does become possible? Were it not so, Science would be impossible.

As our body has affinity with all the infinite forms of matter in Creation, so our spirit too must have some affinity with all those impalpable forces to which we give the sublime and comprehensive name—Will of God. These forces, diffused in Creation, assume an infinite variety of forms, and some or all of them may have something like personality or like will in them. Human spirits, after they vacate their bodily tenements, may be floating in space and operating in conjunction with such forces and may come into occasional contact with spirits still imprisoned in the body, that is, with living persons. Or living persons may have the power of projecting their own spirit into those regions where such contact can be had. To such contact by perception some assign the scornful epithet, hallucination. But what is hallucination after all? Imaginative perception may be as real to the mind or spirit as perception by the bodily senses to the body. When I feel pain in any part of my body in a dream, that pain is as real to me as any pain can be during my waking hours. Similarly, if I experience any pleasurable sensation in a dream, it is equally real to me. And if we believe its reality to depend upon its continuance, even then it cannot be said to be unreal merely because it ceases

with the dream. It was real to the mind at the time it was felt, and it must continue to be real to it as a memory even after waking. As a part of the experience of the mind in its ceaseless activity every sensation must ever be an inseparable link in an infinite chain.

If no atom of matter is lost or wasted in Nature, surely it is easier to believe that no portion of spirit can be lost or wasted in the infinity of Being. We are in the spirit-world now, and shall be there always.

* * *

The Unreality of this World

There is with us a haunting sense of the unreality of this world as we advance in years, and we cannot escape it.

This world is the only reality to the young who cannot see anything beyond it, but to the old it is a shadowy configuration of a world, the substance of which lies elsewhere. To the young appearances are the only reality, and that which does not appear does not exist; but to the old, whose mind has got tired of appearances, the apprehension of some reality beyond them becomes an urgent spiritual need.

Does it not seem as though the most impressive facts in the history of this world were no more than mere appearances, phantasmagoria? Where are all the great conquests and the empires they set up? We only read of their decline and

fall. Alexander's conquest of the East is no more real to us now than the conquest of Troy by the Greeks. The empire of the Caesars lives in musty volumes, and the empire of Napoleon sleeps in the Hotel des Invalides!

What are these names—Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon—but labels of passing pageants—mere indices of change? Apart from their fame, where is their life-work? How much of it is there that lives in the lives of men? How much of it do we carry within us as part of our being? If it be that only our soul-possessions will go along with us into the life beyond and form our world of reality there, then it is another class of great men whose life-work may be said to have laid the foundations of that world in our being. They too are names, but their names stand for the world they made.

* * *

Man is Slave to his own Ideas

Man is not so much the master of his own ideas as he thinks; he is more of a slave than a master. Most of us are led or driven by our ideas; and it would seem that the greater and more powerful the man, the greater is his subjection in this respect. The ordinary man who does everything in a half-hearted easy sort of way often escapes the compulsion of those dominating ideas to which the great man is peculiarly liable. Indeed, the genius of the great man is his tyrant; it drives an Alexander to the East to die at Babylon at the age of thirty-four, and a Napoleon to the

snows of Russia to destroy his empire at the height of its glory. There are in our own age men who, if not very great, are yet not too small, and they too are being driven onward under the stress of some favourite ideas of which they think themselves masters. It is strange how a desire, sometimes a mere whim, evolves itself into a haunting idea, and how that idea expands into some fascinating scheme which, as it grows, entangles the author's thoughts more and more until he lies bound hand and foot at the mercy of chance.

Such in brief is the life-history even of those men who shook the world, and of the little men who are shaken about in it. The same tragedy is being enacted on a smaller stage and in a more comic fashion every day in every man's heart. But how to prevent it? Moderation and calm judgment, diffidence and self-restraint, faith and good-will may help us to do so. If we cannot be heroes, let us at least try not to be fools!

* * *

The Use of Metaphysics

'Metaphysics' may not lead us to reality, but it may show us the direction in which reality lies; for it teaches us that we must transcend the physical bounds of sense in order to move towards the object of our spiritual quest. In this way the value of the aid given by metaphysics is great. By teaching us to go beyond our physical limitations towards a higher being it strengthens the tendency in us to seek the truth that lies beyond appearances; and thus it leads us by gradual stages to God.

The modern world has been too much inclined to regard physical studies as the only profitable occupation for the human mind, forgetting that the discoveries of science can have a meaning only when interpreted by the aid and in the light of that deeper meaning which metaphysics enables us to attribute to them. Metaphysics is to the mind what religion is to the heart, and each has a faith of its own, stronger than the faith of Science which is confined to what is known. The study of Science has to be completed by the study of Metaphysics if we wish to get nearer to Reality. And this desire is an insistent demand of our Mind, that has to be supplied,—a yearning of the Soul, that has to be gratified. Aristotle is said to have intended that his Metaphysics should be studied after completing the study of his Physics, because it was concerned with what lies beyond the domain of Physics. There is reason in this. Let us know the physical world first, and we shall be driven to seek for the real cause of its being, which lies beyond all physical, that is, beyond phenomenal or superficial causes.

Though we cannot discover the real cause of anything in the same way as we can discover its physical causes, yet a deep and strong faith is engendered in the soul by studying the physical universe, through and from which we can rise into the regions of the Spirit where Religion is our guide and leads us to the Maker of all.

* * *

Peace

Can we ever be at peace in this life?

Surrounded as we are by conditions of restlessness and strife, the characteristic features of modern life, perfect peace for the individual does not appear to be possible, except for those whose temperament and whose aims either find a congenial atmosphere in unrest or are so far above it as not to be affected by it. To a peace-loving mind not altogether absorbed in contemplation of other and higher realities, such a condition of existence may, through constant and persistent effort, become less intolerable—though it can never become congenial. We should aim at this and no more; for to become utterly indifferent is a mode of escape that cannot be commended. To look at the affairs of this world from the lofty height of the philosopher or the sage may not be within the power of ordinary men like us, but we have the power to look up to such men and become their humble disciples and followers in some things, if not in all. What is there to prevent us? It is well to attach oneself to a great mind or great soul in this way; perhaps it is the best and surest means of receiving a current of what one of our eminent countrymen has happily termed, "Soul-force." Soul-force is one of the most potent realities of God's creation; it is a force that comes from the soul of the Universe. It is a breath of the Omnipotent, and once we begin to realise that it can reside in us, we feel strong and are at peace. It also enables us to be more efficient as workers in the ordinary business of life.

* * *

Our First Duty

Whatever the ideals of our politicians may be, and whatever their aims in life, the most important work for us is to improve the minds and morals of our countrymen. The lowest ranks in this country are in a most degraded and pitiable condition. To raise them to the level of human beings is a work well worth doing. Shall we leave it to be done by the Christian Missionaries, who are undoubtedly a noble race of workers?

How much better it would be if, instead of wasting time over fruitless politics, some of our able young men devoted their time and energies to carrying on this humanising work on a larger scale than is possible for foreign missionaries! Instead of parading such pompous catchwords as the 'uplift of the depressed classes' for political purposes, let them use their best efforts to improve the condition of these wretched beings who are their brethren. It is one's misfortune occasionally to see such revolting specimens of the indigenous human species that one feels ashamed to think that they belong to one's own country, for they seem to be the lowest of the low and the vilest of the vile. No charity could be more useful and more opportune than making them even a hundredth part better than they are. Every one of us can and ought to do something in this direction. Humanity before politics!

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When a man retires from the 'world' he is supposed to retire into obscurity, and to be lost. For what we cannot see and do not think about, has practically no existence for us; and even if it does exist it is lost in relation to us. There is much in the universe that may be said to be non-existent in this way, because it is unperceived by us and remains unknown to us. Here then we have an unknown region and a man lost to sight; both are beyond our horizon. But is it not possible that our lost man may be doing something in the unknown region without our knowledge and permission? Might he not see light where to us all is obscurity and gloom? Might he not there see visions of life more real than our mechanical existence and discover aims and aspirations higher and purer than accumulation of wealth and power, and a civilization that is something better than shreds and patches? Might he not, in short, find that ideal towards which we are constantly tending but which we seem never to attain?

From light into darkness, and from darkness into light, these are the conditions of our being and we cannot go on for ever seeking light through the peep-hole of the world. Our way lies through the world but it leads beyond the world. Life here is only a record of our blundering activities; it is a series of erratic adventures in trying to find life: Only the man who gets beyond this stage might hope to have a glimpse of the light of another world. Having passed

through the 'world' he sits watching patiently on the frontier of the Eternal!

* * *

The World behind the Veil

The thin curtain of the eyelid can hide the whole world from us and make it as though it were not. What if a dark veil were thrown over the mind,—the dark veil of ignorance or incomplete knowledge? We rely too much on our five senses for our information, and they bring us news only of what they perceive. Though they do not tell us that there is nothing beyond the range of their limited perception, yet we seem always to believe that they are conveying to us some such message by way of inference. Our senses perform their duties faithfully, and if they do not give us more information, it is because they cannot. They can function only in a palpable material world, and they cannot be cognizant of any immaterial existence (if such there be) around us.

It is only an immaterial mind that can function in an immaterial world. But is it possible for us in this life to have personal experience of this? We are told, on good authority, that some persons have the power of seeing what is invisible to the eye—bodiless forms and impalpable existences which to them are as real as their own persons. We, men of the world, who profess to know better, smile at all this and contemptuously dismiss the subject with the sententious remark,

"hallucination!" We were taught this word by clever men and now it is our own property, but does it not bear the hall-mark of "little-knowledge" like many other seemingly sage remarks of ours? It supposes that what the mind sees can only be an image thrown out of itself into vacancy, as upon a screen, and then perceived by it as an objective reality. Such a thing does happen, but because it does, are we bound to infer that nothing else can happen or is possible to the mind? Prophets and saints have seen visions and told us so, but we have found it difficult to believe them and have tried to explain their experiences in the light of science; or rather, in the light of our little knowledge.

But of late a change has happily come over our mentality. Proceeding by the way of science a little further in the right direction, we have discovered that the mind has certain hidden powers which come into play on certain occasions. It has been found that by putting a person into a kind of sleep or trance, that is, by suspending the operation of his five senses, it is possible to induce in his mind a higher and more potent faculty and a keener perceptiveness that can operate at a greater distance than is possible under normal conditions. A man after being put into this condition can tell what is happening in a distant place, and can describe in detail all that he sees there. How does this happen? Not through the senses, because they are locked up for the time being, but through some mysterious power that the mind has of reaching any distant object, not by mere thought, but by actual per-

ception. This power cannot be denied; and it suggests the question whether it would be possible for the mind to perform the same function if it was disconnected from the body in which it is lodged. It is similar to the question: Would it be possible for Electricity to exist apart from the machinery we employ in order to make it work for us?

The forces of Nature, operating under the direction of the Supreme Will, are functioning in millions of forms in millions of ways in millions of places, and a particle of the same is temporarily lodged in this body of ours to work there in a certain manner. Have we any right to suppose, because of this temporary bodily association, that our soul has lost its original power of moving freely in what we now call the unknown? The results of experiments made in 'clairvoyance' go far to satisfy us that the mind (or the soul) can work independently of such media as the five senses or any material agency whatsoever. When such is the capability of the mind while imprisoned in the body, what could it not achieve when set free from those limitations and those restraints which its prison-life necessarily imposes upon it? It is not difficult to believe that what the common mind could then achieve is already within the range of the powers of those uncommon minds we sometimes hear of. The senses in their case do not act as a blind, but on the contrary they themselves are screened and hidden away by a sixth sense more efficient and more potent than them all.

The age we live in has done a great service to religion. What will entitle it to the admiration and respect of posterity is the fact that in it religion and science first began to meet on the same ground, though still denying each other, till science began to read a deeper and more spiritual meaning into natural phenomena than it was wont to do.

* * *

Every Soul its own World

Every human soul is its own world, and in trying to adjust its relations with other worlds, it often goes astray. It is born into a world of relative and artificial values from amongst which it has to choose the right ones for itself. False ideas and conventions and illusions mislead it. It has to go along certain paths, then it has to retrace its steps in order to start afresh. It has to go on accumulating useless treasures at first, and then to choose the best way of getting rid of them in order to find room for others better worth having. It has to travel through regions where the aspect of reality changes at every stage of the journey, and it has to look back and look about and look ahead at every step of its progress. Its self-completeness as a unit, far from making its action absolutely independent, hampers it and imposes upon it inexplicable restraints of subtle potency. Yet, in spite of all these difficulties, it has the power to choose its own line of progress, its own country and its own climate and its own

modes of self-adjustment and self-expression. This is its life-work here below.

* * *

The Dust of Life's Journey

We begin to realise somewhat late in life that in order to attain purity we have to throw off the dust collected on our bodies and souls in the course of life's journey. We also feel that the so-called worldly advantages, such as rank and wealth and power, are impurities that defile. We have to be rid of these before we can attain purity, but it is not always possible to throw them off at will; we have therefore to try unceasingly to free our minds from their evil effects, till at last we can throw them off spiritually, if not physically. The man who values himself and desires to be valued by others on account of his wealth and status, admits that he is merely their appendage, and that he would be nothing without them. If he makes good use of these advantages for the benefit of mankind, it is certainly meritorious; but it is not good to desire them in order to be able to do good by their means alone; nor is it good to make the doing of good an excuse for having them. A man can do good to others however poor he may be; if he cannot give money, he can give his services in some way or other,—and this would be worth more than money in a higher sense.

* * *

Self-admiration

We spend a good deal of our time in conscious or unconscious self-admiration! This habit arises indirectly from the original instinct of self-preservation, and may have its use within certain limits, but it must not be allowed to grow. Even when it takes the form of self-esteem, akin to self-respect, it should be suspected and discouraged. Whenever we find ourselves admiring any of our own real or supposed good qualities, the best thing to do is to think at once of some of our bad ones. Then the mind, appealed to as a judge, and feeling complimented thereby, is apt to show its impartiality and give a fairly correct judgment! If encouraged in this work, it will go on doing it better and better, and we shall be benefited by the true information it will thus give us. Self-examination and the sifting of one's own virtues and vices will gradually become easy as we go along, and much of our pretension will cease.

Any one whose object is self-purification in order to enable the soul to occupy those high places to which it has a rightful claim, cannot afford to waste his time in playing with those cheap flattering vanities which fascinate and enthral the worldling.

* * *

Doing Right by Instinct

That man is truly noble who does what is right by instinct and not under the compulsion of

reason or religion or social conventions. Such men will be rare, but it is certain that there must be some born into every age and in every country. Their existence, though unknown to others, must exert its beneficent influence upon their surroundings in the imperceptible manner in which the forces of Nature, and air and light perform their functions. A good man does not aim at doing good, he simply does it—just as he walks or sits down, or eats, or sleeps. It is his nature to do so and he cannot help it.

Now it might well be argued that on this very account he deserves much less credit than the man who makes a conscious and continuous effort and aims at becoming better than he is. This is the class to which (I hope) the educated belong, and I have great sympathy with them. But, meritorious as the effort may be, it is something different from that pristine nobility of soul which is the prerogative of the other order, and an endowment from Nature. A great sinner may become a great saint, and there have been such cases, but he can never attain to that original purity of soul which distinguished some of the patriarchs and the prophets of old, and even such spirits as bore the labels " Socrates " and " Plato " on their trunks.

* * *

Paralysis of the Spirit

If we fail to perceive all the beauty and purity around us, the fault lies in our own perception,

not in Nature. But if we perceive it and yet fail to take some of it into our own soul, the spiritual part of our being must be inert or paralysed. This paralysis of the spirit is a more dreadful disease than paralysis of the body; the latter is visible and may be treated while the former cannot even be known to exist; and it often happens that the patient himself is quite unaware of it. He lives in perfect ease and comfort, and is, to all appearance, a well-educated, well-informed and cultured man. He seems, moreover, to be quite satisfied with himself and the doings of the world around him. Yet the soul within him is paralysed: he has no fine sensibilities, no internal thrills and vibrations that respond to those innumerable suggestions of infinite beauty and grace that throng unceasingly from all sides upon the spirit-guided mind.

* * *

A Universal Pattern

Will not facility of communication help to mould future mankind somewhat after the same pattern; and would such a result, if attained, be an unqualified blessing? Perhaps not; for there can be no guarantee that the pattern chosen would be of the best. Superficial superiority can easily be imitated; but the real superiority that lies deeper in the life of a nation, as in that of an individual, is not so easily acquired or imitated. There are certain sterling qualities to be found in every nation and every race, if we would only take the trouble to find them out. From their very

nature they are a non-commercial commodity; they cannot be shipped in bales from one country to another, and there are no agencies for their sale or exchange. And Journalism (including ephemeral literature of the commercial-literary type) is not the best medium for their circulation. Such agencies create a demand only for cheap ware, and supply it. I am unable to think with complacence of the probability in the near future of one race dressing itself in all the external peculiarities of another, foolishly believing that it can thus acquire the virtues peculiar to its model. I am not an admirer of such lionhide decoration and borrowed superiority.

Neither clothes, nor manners, nor institutions make the man—they are merely the man's modes of doing things. They tell you something about the man, but you cannot make the man synthetically by their means.

Facility of communication will at first cause a great stirring up of good and bad, a great confusion of ideas and aims, great misconception and error, and then the nations will settle down on their own characteristic qualities and follow their original bent. Real assimilation, such as might in the remote future lead to the evolution of one world-race firmly fixed on the common basis of humanity and its virtues, is perhaps a dream.

* * *

The Power of Man

What power is confined within this little form of man! His will can create a world or destroy

a world in the brief space of a few years. A Christ and a Mohammed could create a new world, a new civilization and set it afloat in eternity; an Alexander and a Napoleon could destroy and rebuild kingdoms and empires as a pastime between youth and middle age!

The will power of man, developing in the domain of science, can achieve such marvels as ærial navigation and wireless telegraphy. When we perceive that such things are the result of the activity of the will of mortal man, in a limited space of time, does it not become easier to understand the perpetual activity of an eternal Omnipotent Will and the creation and perfection of the Universe?

* * *

The hidden Life of Man

We take into account only that part of the life of a man which he shares with his fellow-beings—the part that belongs to social life. But perhaps the most valuable part of a man's life is that which remains unknown. We judge by what we see, and we judge mainly by results, and the results must be such as can accord with our conventions and please us. This is the way in which the world judges, and the only way in which, owing to its limitations, it can judge. But men who can think and feel more deeply are not bound by such judgments, nor will they follow this course blindly. When we see machinery at work, or the results of its operations, we seldom

think of the forces of Nature of which it is the visible agent; yet surely the scope of those forces is wider than the extent of the operative power of the machinery. And though we may not be able to see their work beyond the machine's functions, yet we cannot deny their actual or potential existence. Let us remember this in the case of the most intricate and most delicate machinery in creation—the mind of man.

* * *

Man as Mind

There is a subtle, indescribable pleasure in imagining oneself as existing in a bodiless state, free from the limitation and the irksome restraint of the senses. The busy man of the world has no leisure to indulge in such reveries, but the idle man of contemplation loves to steal a few moments from the affairs of the world to be lost in dreams of a higher life.

Man is mind, and as such he is always at work, asleep or awake. In fact, as mind he does not sleep; his rest is only another form of mental activity, a migration into regions where the body cannot accompany him. This happens not only in dreams but often in our waking hours when we imagine ourselves travelling in a distant country known or unknown to us. It is imagination, of course; but when we say that we imagine ourselves in another place, we only mean that we as body are not there. But can it be said with equal truth that we as *mind* are not there? To the

mind as mind its own function and the images presented to it are the only reality. Such reality may not be true in relation to other minds and other objects, but it is none the less real and true to the functioning mind itself. Its truth may not be the same under different conditions, but it is nothing but the truth to that mind at the instant it is presented.

But this, it may be objected, would include cases of delusion, hallucination, and even insanity. What then? The objection only means that what is presented in such cases is not *our* idea of reality. But who can tell whose reality is the more real?

Why should we not believe that there is an activity of the mind, uncontrolled by the senses, which does present to its inner vision pictures of objects and conditions unrelated to our ordinary conception of things? Perhaps they have a relation to something beyond the cognizance of the senses, and thus the mental perception may in itself be a communication with other existences that lie outside the scope of the senses.

Our sense-perceptions are only half-knowledge; for they relate only to those objects which are cognizable by the senses. Thus, our mind is employed in viewing only one aspect of Nature,—the visible or perceptible. What about the other side which is much the bigger hemisphere of the two? Because we do not see it, ought we to deny it? Are we sure that reality does not lie in that region?

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He who guides is a Benefactor

Man needs guidance, and he who guides is a benefactor. This is the way in which the greatest of all service may be rendered. To save a man's life is recognized as a great service; but saving a man's soul is seldom thought of as a service of any great merit by the average man. Soul to him is a sort of utopia and exists only in imagination; this is why he thinks so little about it. He has a little more concern with the mind, but that too only as a steward or factor who manages his affairs for him. He thinks of its efficiency for work alone, and not of its rectitude or honesty. But a little reflection tells us that in some respects the mind has to be something more and something better than a machine. The guidance it needs is not the same as an engine-driver's skill. It has to do with something that is not merely a function, something that is connected with a mysterious feeling that lies deep in our consciousness, making itself felt in strange and unexpected ways,—a feeling capable of creating a heaven or a hell within the mind itself.

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Man cannot do without Religion

Man cannot do without religion, his highest thoughts and aspirations lead up to it, and he cannot help being so led. If he bars the access of those mysterious subtle emotions which draw him towards the creative source of all being, he at once relinquishes the divine in him and reduces

himself to the level of the brute creation. If, in order to avoid this, he uses his power in such a way as to become merely an efficient worker, he only succeeds in making himself an efficient machine. It is certain that he cannot be complete without 'soul,' and soul does not mean mind alone.

History tells us how in times of revolutionary commotion, when a people loses its head and the brute tendencies of human nature are uppermost, an attempt is made to destroy or abolish religion, it being associated in the mind of the mob with tyranny. But with the return of sanity religion too returns to its desecrated shrine, and is more firmly established than ever. Man is destined to be religious. Religion has given great civilizations to the world; want of religion has not. Religion first gave birth to the idea of man's equality and fraternity, and the essence of socialism is contained in religion. And it may be said that one religion at least has practically established it by ordinance. The purest and most refined socialism in the world is that of Islam.

Let us use the good we possess and it becomes doubly ours; let us practise what we are taught, and we can set an example to the whole world and teach it by peaceful means what elsewhere in revolutionary times brutish and bloodthirsty mobs have tried to enforce by riot and murder. Muslims received the command of Equality and Fraternity more than thirteen hundred years ago and they are 'brothers' and 'equals.' But, if in actual practice there appear some inequality here

and there—some being rich and some poor,—this is owing to those conditions, social and economic, which are the result of contact with other races and the impact of foreign ideas and methods and manners. Yet the original feeling of fraternal equality as Muslims is still a living force in the hearts of Muslims.

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The Path we choose becomes easy

Is it more difficult and more troublesome to do good than to commit evil? All troubles become endurable, if we have patience and good-will; and all things become easy, if we refuse to be overcome by difficulties. It is an almost imperceptible impulse in the mind that first sets the will-machinery going. Sometimes that impulse is healthy and hopeful, at other times, sluggish and morose; and the result, as seen in our action, accords with its quality. The secret of success is to go to work with a cheerful mind, full of hope and assurance, but not over-sanguine. It is not easy to command such a temper, but we, must not be deterred by this initial difficulty.

Whatever our natural disposition—cheerful or morose, hopeful or despondent, we can constantly keep before us the example of men who have succeeded in the most arduous undertakings by following this simple precept.

It is the inclination and attitude of the mind that is all-important. Any path that the mind chooses to follow becomes smooth and easy for

it. This profound truth has been set down in our Holy book as the key to conduct. He who persists in truth and righteousness will find his path made smooth for him, and he who persists in untruth and error will also find his path made easy for him. Who can doubt that the justice underlying this dispensation has a terrible significance? The question of free-will and responsibility implied in it points the way to Heaven and Hell.

* * *

The Compensations of Age

Age has its compensations. The usual complaints against it may be true; but the great benefits that it can and does confer are not to be ignored. If it takes away our bodily strength and energy and deprives us of some of the pleasures that accompany them, it gives us in return a calmer mind and a wider and serener outlook. It opens for us doors and windows through which we can obtain glimpses of a higher world of reality.

In youth all our quests are of this world, and we are in pursuit of some object that offers some worldly advantage. In age the mind begins to realise that, if it would attain its true heritage, it must look beyond this world, regarding the life here as a stepping-stone to a higher existence.

In youth and middle-age we are playing the game of life; all our thoughts are fixed on it, and all our movements are governed by it; there is no world for us beyond its limits. We

have lost or won the game, but what does it matter? The game was an occupation while it lasted, but we have another occupation when we enter on old age, an occupation that gives us a calmer and more satisfying pleasure. The man who has played a hundred different kinds of game, between the ages of six and sixty, likes to sit down by the way side and gaze on he skies. He likes to feel that if his feet are still touching the earth his head is touching the stars! He likes to believe that in those regions where he now finds himself, millions and millions of spirit-worlds, more numerous than the stars of heaven, are floating and functioning around him. He feels that this little dot of an earth has disappeared behind him like a mile-stone and lives in him only as a memory. Then a clearer vision reveals to him the actual presence of countless millions of soul-worlds like his own that fill eternity, and he sees them all pervaded by the light of an invisible sun.

If age brings visions like these, it is not to be slighted but revered.

* * *

Genius is Aristocratic in its Nature

Genius is aristocratic in its nature. It likes to stand above the common level of men and things, and refuses to be democratized! It must stand by itself and rule. In politics it may make use of the mob of politicians it finds to hand, and it may make use of their voices, but it cannot be of them, nor can it be governed by them. It is the same in every department of human activity,

whether physical or mental. The gifted strong man must rule or lead; he cannot be dragged at the tail of a triumphal machine. The origin of kingship is to be found in this law of Nature, that the strong and able must lead; and true kingship in this sense never dies. The man of power is a born king. Any change in the form of a Government does not, and cannot, destroy the essence of kingship, the natural leadership of the able man. For even in democracies there is generally the innate irrepressible power of some one man that makes the cumbersome machine of Government move and work smoothly and with greater efficiency. And if that man happens to be a genius, the result may sometimes be startling. The revolutionary Republic of France became a triumvirate in 1796, and out of it emerged one able man, Napoleon Bonaparte. How is it that he is the only man whom the world remembers out of all that motley crowd of National Assemblies, Councils of Ancients and Senates and Consulates? A strange phenomenon! Explain it as we may, there it remains—one of the wonderful facts in the history of the world growing out of a very simple law of Nature—supremacy of the ablest.

Wonderful, too, that this same Napoleon should have written at the age of 23 or so: "Men who are truly great are like meteors; they shine and consume themselves, that they may lighten the darkness of the earth."

If the great man happens also to be a good man and has the lasting welfare of the whole

world at heart, he may leave behind a new religion, a new civilization and a new world bordering upon eternity.

Napoleon himself could not do this, and sighed to think that the great Arabian Lawgiver had done it.

* * *

Nature's Test

Nature has a way of testing our good and bad qualities, and trials are sent to us for this purpose. But it must not be forgotten that uninterrupted prosperity, the greatest of all trials, is vouchsafed to man in order to search out his inmost qualities. Adversity is an examination of a certain set of qualities, prosperity of another. Patience and endurance, resolution and perseverance, and a calmly cheerful gratitude to Providence for the good it has given—these are the qualities tested in adversity. Moderation, balance, regard for duty, freedom from arrogant self-sufficiency, sympathy with distress, an ever-present consciousness of one's dependence upon the will of a higher power, and a befitting humility of spirit, and an overwhelming and persistent sense of gratitude for all that God has given—these are the qualities that prosperity puts to the test.

Again, the change from prosperity to adversity, or from adversity to prosperity is another mode of trial and involves a severer test.

One of the peculiarities of the human mind is, that it considers itself capable of doing or enduring anything under any conditions of life, but its real capability can only be known when it has actually been tried. Our pre-conceptions, based upon an incorrect estimate of our own powers, often mislead us into beliefs that cannot stand the test of time and fact. Even our philosophy, which in the majority of cases is no more than a desire to believe certain things in a certain way, breaks down under it.

* * *

Our Odd Moments

We do not seem to realise that the odd moments we lose every day grow into hours and days and months, and it is not possible for us to know what we have lost by not making use of them.

The moments so lost are like lottery tickets, where an unknown number may represent a fortune. Who knows what might have been gained from one precious moment if it had been seized and made use of? A moment seems too small a space of time for much work, but it is long enough for the birth of an idea or an impulse. It has space enough to hold the small electric button which can set a whole complicated system of machinery in motion. And is not a moment the beginning of time for us —of an hour as of a century? A moment

was our beginning and a moment will be our end. To think that one moment represents our eternity!

* * *

Racial Characteristics

We cannot ignore the existence of individual and racial characteristics; they assert themselves in every action. Once we get to know them we can easily foretell how a certain individual or a certain people will behave in certain circumstances. Besides such inferences, if we have the opportunity of observing the actions of people more or less continuously, we are in a still better position to judge. We are in this position as regards our own people; and also as regards the British, with whom we have had dealings for nearly two centuries. But it is doubtful whether we as a people properly understand and appreciate those qualities upon which British greatness is founded. Believing that we have discovered those qualities in their institutions, we are apt to overlook, or at least to underrate, the fact that it was the original innate qualities of the race that slowly produced those institutions, and not the institutions that created those qualities. An instinct of freedom, a self-reliance so complete as to disregard inadequacy of means and resources, an indomitable will asserting itself in continued labour and perseverance, tenacity of purpose that nothing could alter—these, together with great physical and moral courage were the qualities which enabled the yet uncivilized Briton to

throw off the Roman yoke. And they were a good natural foundation for those other high qualities which were developed in the course of centuries by constant struggle with opposing events. This struggle and the sense of self-mastery resulting from it, have ultimately given to the English their balance and their fair-mindedness. And their position in relation to the other powers of Europe, and their dealings with other parts of the world have developed in them an additional quality, which is a marvellous combination of forcefulness and tact, of patriotic selfishness and philanthropic goodwill to all, of love of power and a desire to be just and impartial, of self-esteem and sympathy with others' aspirations. Their institutions, shaped and perfected by their inherent qualities, may in their turn have helped them in the exercise of these qualities, but it is certain that they did not create the original qualities.

Let us honestly say whether we possess any of their original qualities from which their other slowly-developed qualities have emerged; and let us honestly ask ourselves whether institutions alone, borrowed or adopted, will generate those qualities in us. If we do not possess such qualities, would it not be wise to adopt them since we are asking to be allowed to adopt there Institutions?

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Each Man's Work

Every one does some work during his stay on earth. That work may remain unknown to

the outside world, or it may occupy the foremost part in the world's history. Work of the latter description may either be merely external activity, such as that of Napoleon, or merely an internal activity expressed by means of advice and exhortation, as in the case of Jesus, or it may be a vigorous combination of internal and external activities as in the case of the great Prophet of Islam. He, of all the grand figures in history, represents in its most complete form the ideal combination of Chief Pontiff, Lawgiver and Judge, Military Commander and Administrator. His grandeur needs no artificial support from pomp and circumstance, or from gorgeous surroundings and court mummery. He stands before the world's eyes in his patched robes of state, a ruler supreme over the hearts of men.

The great protagonists of superhuman external activity—Alexander, Hannibal, Cæsar, Charlemagne, Napoleon—were only one-sided as compared with him, and the side they presented to the world had no permanence in it. None of them now occupies, as the Prophet (of Islam) does, the central place in a system founded by him, and none of them the chief place, as he does, in the hearts of millions of human beings. He still rules in all those capacities which were united in his person while he lived on earth, and his personality still subsists as a world-force though his person disappeared from the world more than thirteen hundred years ago.

He has given to his followers, not a visionary world of fancy, but a real world of fact to live and

work in. And this world must be controlled from within by forces that have a direct but mysterious connection with the Unseen.

We need not wait till we have a vast field and momentous events for the exercise of such powers as Providence has given us, nor need we fix our thoughts on the external greatness of human affairs, which is only an appearance after all, and the value of which depends entirely upon our own estimate of it. Let us remember that every one of us can be great in the performance of the smallest duty!

* * *

The Enfranchised Soul

Our thoughts and feelings are temporarily confined in a chest and set afloat in Time; but we have large dealings with affairs outside the chest. Let us forget the chest for a while, and the inscription on its label, and we shall find that our thoughts and feelings, to which we give the name Mind, take us at once into the great ocean of Being, where all is Mind. But it is so difficult to forget the chest—it is always in our way—and we are so used to its presence that we can hardly dispense with it. Thus we are drawn in different directions by two different kinds of desires, and the conflict continues as long as we live on earth. Let us, however, imagine that we have got rid of the chest, and then let us suppose that we have also got beyond the physical environments of our chest—that is, beyond physical nature, which is the outer circle of our prison.

Where are we then? Merged once more in Being, and a part of the Universal Soul! To realise this during every moment of our imprisonment here is the prerogative of an enfranchised soul. It was the privilege of the great and holy men who are the shining lights of human history. There they are still to lead us. Shall we not follow?

* * *

The Ordeals of Love and Sympathy

The ordeals of love and sympathy are much more severe than we are apt to believe. We suffer more in spirit on account of those we love than on our own account. The finer side of human nature is so designed that it is more keenly sensitive to vicarious pain than to one's own. A mother's heart is the best example of this; it has no feeling for itself, it lives for another, and in this it stands quite apart, and there is nothing else like it in all creation. But short of this supreme standard of self-devotion and willing self-sacrifice, there are various other forms of love, each imperative and exacting in its own way. The heart that gives way before the intensity of its own love is occasionally dragged over thorns, and no Philosophy has the power to prevent this. Philosophy does not thrive within the domain of love; and intellect cannot rule the heart. Is there no haven of refuge, then, for those who grieve over the sufferings of others or mourn their loss? There is: submission to that Will which, in its beneficence, has made our life on this earth

an infinitesimal speck surrounded on all sides by eternity. No earthly pain can last for ever.

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Pleasure and Pain

The same conditions may produce pain in the case of one person and pleasure in that of another, and even in the case of the same person they may cause pain at one time and pleasure at another. This is a matter of common experience. But the essential thing for us is the control of our mind in order to insure its balance and attain Peace in the midst of such conditions.

We are not to seek pleasure for its own sake, nor to dread pain as an evil, but to prepare the mind to receive both as guests. We cannot be utterly indifferent to our guests, but we must not be too subservient to them. This is the golden mean extolled by sages, which we have to follow in the conduct of life. Religion alone shows us the right way. The immobility of Stoicism is an iron virtue, too cold and rigid for the human heart, and we cannot hold it long in our heart without losing some of our finer human qualities. But we may take a small dose of it in combination with the softer and more flexible qualities pointed out to us by religion. Humility, patience, submission to a higher will, and gratitude —out of these will emerge in time a mild and serene cheerfulness, and a sense of peace. The human heart cannot ask for more.

* * *

Side by side with the instincts of his animal nature, there is in man an irrepressible, urgent and persistent desire to rise from the animal state to the divine. It takes various forms, the oldest and the most potent being religion. All its later forms, as we know, are included in such terms as progress, civilization, etc. The great religious men of the world, whom we call prophets, from Abraham downwards, must have been impelled by that desire in an extraordinary manner and in an extraordinary degree; so extraordinary indeed, that we can hardly understand it now. They were God-possessed. It is inconceivable to us how an ignorant illiterate man living among idolatrous boors and shepherds could be so dominated by the idea of the unity of God as to set all other human considerations aside, and how in that primitive uncultured age he came to believe his God to be, not only all-powerful, but merciful and beneficent. He caught at the great truth by intuition, took it to heart, and clung to it as the all-in-all of his existence here and hereafter; whereas the Grecian philosopher in an age of cultured thought was labouring to find the same truth by a slower and more laborious process, and actually took some centuries to arrive at it. God who was found, seen, and felt in the barren sun-burnt deserts of Egypt, Palestine and Arabia, had to be sought for dialectically in Greece from the age of Thales to the age of Socrates and Plato, and even then He could not be found in actual living presence as the Indivisible

Eternal One. Yet in either case it was the heavenly instinct of the earthly animal at work, impelled by faith and hope to realise itself as part of the divine. It is a wonderful fact—if we have the eyes to see it and the heart to understand its import.

* * *

Life a Probation

Life is a trial for those who think and feel; it is both a probation and an ordeal. Even the lowest type of pleasure-hunting man or woman who is all body tingling with sensuousness must realise this sometime or other. Perhaps only the lower animals are incapable of feeling it to be so.

Up to a certain age, when we are in the process of growing, all our faculties are engaged in that process and we are tending forward to attain completeness. This prevents us from pausing to reflect; the mind is moving along with the body and finds an exciting pleasure in the vigorous forward movement of its companion. It is a normal, healthy kind of pleasure, no doubt; but it leaves no room for reflection or 'the pale cast of thought.'

Young people find life a series of expectations and enjoyments, and give no thought to the morrow. But when age deprives the body of its pleasing activities and the mind begins slowly to weigh all matters that come before it, to sift the evidence produced and to judge the case on

its own merits—it is then that we begin to realise the truth that life is a probation and an ordeal. What is the worldly ideal of life? Progressive work in order to secure the comforts of the body and its sensuous enjoyment. What is the spiritual ideal? Continuous self-purification of the soul. How are the two aims to be reconciled? To remain surrounded throughout our life by influences that drag us into the vortex of earthly life, and yet to escape their more pernicious effects and avoid degradation of the spirit—this is our probation and our ordeal.

We have made ourselves part of an unnecessarily complicated system of life by our own vagrant course of progress through the centuries, and it is owing to this that we find it so difficult to obey this simple injunction of religion, philosophy and good sense: 'Have faith in the higher powers and keep the heart pure and righteous in all your actions.' Conscience, both here and hereafter, will judge us by this standard and not by the magnitude of our mechanical achievements in the domain of external civilization.

* * *

Past Civilizations

What has become of those great civilizations of which we occasionally discover some fragmentary remains buried in the ground? Those remains show us how great the people must have been, whose handiwork they are, yet nothing is known of them except that they were. Our knowledge does not go back much beyond three thousand years or so, and even then it is hazy. Is this

the inevitable result of man's material prosperity? How many centuries it must have taken him to reach that height of power and grandeur and glory of which all the evidence now left consists of buried ruins and buried utensils—the delight of the burrowing archaeologist! "Sic transit gloria mundi" is the perpetual lament of the human heart.

When we come to periods better known and travel over regions covered by them, with History for our guide, we seem again to tread over the scattered ruins of kingdoms and empires, and the same lament is ringing in our ears. It is a sound that haunts us for ever and we cannot free our minds from the grip of its melancholy pathos. Again and again does the question surge up from the depths of our being:—Why was it so ordained? Nothing, nothing is left but the spirit of the departed—which has come down to us enshrined in their literature and art where these have survived.

In striking contrast to this stands the case of those comparatively rude peoples among whom some sage or prophet happened to be born,—one whose spoken word, imprinted upon the hearts of men in letters of fire, has escaped the disastrous fate of kingdoms and empires and come down to us as a living flame that cannot be extinguished. What lesson does this convey to the thoughtful?

* * *

A Wise Man makes Good Use of His Religion

A wise man will make good use of his religion whatever it may be; a foolish man is apt to misuse it. The wise man, especially if he is good, will use it for purifying his own mind and the minds of others, so as to bring love and sympathy and harmony and peace into the lives of men. The foolish man will use it as a weapon to hurt his neighbours.

I am afraid many good missionaries who devote their lives to the propagation of their own faith in foreign countries, doing excellent human work at great self-sacrifice, occasionally overstep the line of moderation. They incur this charge as soon as they begin to abuse other religions, in however mild a form, with the intention, not in itself culpable, of exalting their own. But it is possible, or should be, not only possible but easy, for them to expound the beauties of their own faith in a manner that may appeal to the imagination and the heart of the hearer without offending the susceptibilities of the followers of other religions. All religions have some beauties in them, and therefore the choice of subjects should not present much difficulty. Would it be good taste or good manners to vilify the moral or social peculiarities of our friends or neighbours? Would any person belonging to decent society ever think of doing such a thing —especially in order to be able to extol his own virtues by contrast?

I hope the Missionaries of Islam will rise above this while endeavouring to explain to the

people of Europe the noble simplicity and purity of their religion with its unquenchable faith in, and virile submission to, the God of Nature.

* * *

Man's Head touches Heaven

Man does not seem to know his own height. He stands with his feet on earth but his head can touch the highest heaven! There is much in him and around him to make him conscious of this, but he is heedless. Feeling the solid earth at his feet, he believes that he is only there, and that he will always remain there!

He has some excuse for this feeling, we must allow. It is a beautiful little earth with its seas and mountains and valleys and streams; with green and blue and gold all round; with its breezes and showers, its fruits and flowers, and its infinite variety of animal and vegetable life—all for the use of man! Man feels that he is the lord of it—and forgets the Power that set him there! All his time is spent in making the most of his demesne, for there is so much work to be done in it; he has to provide himself with contrivances for fetching hidden treasures out of the earth; to set metes and bounds on its surface for various purposes; to devise means for going round it by land and sea and air; to build doll-houses and doll-factories in it—in which he has to abide till eternity! These are some of his thoughts while he goes on with his daily work. He has spun out an enormous web of words in the course of his work, and it is the repository of these ideas.

There has been so much work for his hands and feet and mouth on this beautiful little earth that he has almost forgotten that his destination is elsewhere, and that he is only working his way to it through all this anxious labour and its impediments. Occasionally, when he realises this, he stands up from his stooping posture, draws himself up to his full height, and becomes conscious that his head can touch high heaven. His thoughts then become philosophy, and his feelings, poetry—and religion!

* * *

How Man has built up this 'Civilization.'

From man's ceaseless activities on earth, there has come into existence a vast and shapeless accumulation of facts and events connected with his random deeds, which were in many cases the result of selfish instincts and impulses. If a thread of continuity of endeavour can be traced through them—which our ingenuity soon enables us to discover—we at once conclude that man has been deliberately striving to build up what we call "civilization" and to work out his high destiny!

But is this not a case of believing what we wish to believe? To say that Providence designed it thus, and that through all the erratic, inconsistent, and often unintelligible career of man on earth there seems to run a fine imperceptible chain of inner causation (which may be attributed to a superior directing will) is very different from saying that man himself, with conscious aim and deliberate effort, has raised this

great fabric of civilization which is perpetually being built and repaired. When man began to think and to regulate his actions, from that point of time onwards his actions have revealed some semblance of connectedness and continuity, and of deliberate intent to reach a higher level. But even then it cannot be declared with certainty that his aim from that fresh commencement has been consistently to strive to raise himself to a more exalted state of spiritual existence. The moment such an idea entered his mind was the moment when religion or philosophy was born. From that moment we are on safer ground in inferring that man has been deliberately aiming at building up a better world. There is, however, some danger in taking this too easily for granted. The danger is, that illogically, though quite naturally, it may further be inferred that all that he is doing tends towards a higher level, and such a conclusion would be utterly false. We see what man is doing, how he is behaving, to what heights of self-devotion and self-sacrifice he can rise under the stress of adverse circumstances, and to what depths of bestial degradation he can allow his self-indulgence to drag him down in prosperity. In view of all this it is difficult to believe either that man is always striving upwards or that something like divine direction can be traced in all his doings. There is no pessimism in this admission. I only mean that direction is there if he chooses to take it, and that he is not unduly hampered in the exercise of his free will.

* * *

The Power of Thought

Thought is quicker than light and quicker than sight; it conquers distance and annihilates space. It does not take even a second to reach the remotest part of this earth, or any other planet; in less than a moment we are among the rings of Saturn or in the dark spots of the Sun, and it costs no greater effort to roam from star to star. All our mechanical contrivances for travelling through space are aids to the body; thought is independent of them. They are mere embodiments of thought. Our greatest feats in marinautics and aeronautics are no more than thought nerved into resolution and put into action; and all our wireless doings too are no more than this. When we can do so much by means of thought in the outer world, where the possibilities are much more limited, could we not transcend all physical limitations and reach the Supreme Will bodied forth in Nature and called God? Have not men done this before us? The prophets have shown us the way, and were they not men? How did God seem so near to them, and how is it that he seems so far to us, though in us and around us? Her Grace of Bedford could reach India from England in three or four days by means of her little airship. Could we not use our ship of Faith and reach Heaven in less time? Only earnest and sincere effort is needed.

* * *

Tolerance: Islam and Christianity

Our religion teaches us not to fight with other religions, and we know it is not the wise who fight over religion, nor those who are broad-minded and tolerant. For such men are able to see the good that there is in all religions and to acknowledge the merits of all those great men who were once its exponents. If a man shows religious prejudice in such a way as to vilify other religions or their founders, we may at once set him down as ignorant, narrow-minded and ill-bred. I do not know much about other religions, but Islam and Christianity (which are allied) ought never to forget their kinship. They both rose among a Semitic people and in the same quarter of the globe; they both have had great careers which have influenced and moulded the civilization of the world; and they both have had to do with proud martial races who have made, and are still making history. They need not and they must not be enemies; there need be no rivalry between them, but only a wholesome spirit of emulation if they have not lost their high ideals. Let them meet as Sultan Salahuddin and King Richard, Coeur de Lion, could meet after fighting.

* * *

Modern Contribution to Morality

Are the Ultra-moderns contributing anything of value to the morality of mankind? Neither in modern life nor in modern literature do we find anything of that delicate sense of morality

which was so prominent in them not long ago. What seems to distinguish modern life and modern manners, modern costume and modern literature in these days is a superior scorn of morality, and even of modesty! Not that it substitutes any higher ideals or more useful rules of conduct for what it rejects; it only fancies itself superior and goes its own way. It may have done some clever things during the past quarter of a century or so, and it certainly has shown some great qualities in times of stress since 1914, but its trials and its achievements have not made it any more refined, or modest, or God-fearing; nor have they made it contribute any ideas or ideals that will lead to the attainment of such a mentality.

Are we then justified in believing ourselves so vastly superior to our ancestors?

If we have achieved any greatness at all, our many littlenesses would seem to counterbalance it!

* * *

Super-man

There has been much talk of late years about rhat wonderful being, Super-man. Whatever the Creator may have contributed towards his making, we have invested him with qualities of greatness that cannot be explained. One wonders what those qualities really are. It is made to appear that they are somewhat different from those qualities of greatness which our minds

have hitherto associated with the world's greatest men, yet it is not made quite clear in what the difference actually consists.

If the Ex-German-Emperor liked to be thought of as a Super-man, or if the world-famous Mr. Ford should do so, and if votaries of the 'super' cult admitted the claim, still there would be left some doubt in our minds as to the exact difference in 'superity' between these gentlemen and, say, Napoleon Bonaparte.

But the remarkable thing is, that if you take the world's great men and hold them up before you and turn them round, and up and down, to inspect every part of them, they do not crumble to pieces in your hands, whereas the modern Super-man is apt to lose, not only his gilt, but some of the integral portions of his simulacrum! In such a case one asks whether he will go down the centuries intact, or become disintegrated on the journey to posterity and fame.

* * *

The Complement of Forbearance

One of the most difficult things one has to learn in this life is, what may be called, the complement of forbearance; that is, while showing forbearance to others, we must not take too much to heart their follies and sins and crimes, and at the same time we must not condone them.

Our moral perception of right and wrong has to be keen and discriminating, our judgment has

to be impartial and justly severe ; yet we have to show the culprit that forbearance which is due to the frailty of man and to our own higher nature. But how are we to save our own feelings from being unduly hurt by his transgressions? Philosophy tells us that this ought to be done, but it is only religion that teaches us how to do it ; and the two, aiding each other, make the task less difficult for us. Socrates did not curse his judicial murderers, but remained calm and cheerful till the end. Epictetus said only this to the master who twisted his leg until he broke it : " Did I not tell you that you would break it? " And then the sublime benevolence of that cry still resounding in our hearts—" Forgive them O, Lord! They know not what they do"! Last but not least, there is the example of our Prophet. Apart from fighting and killing in a cause that was holier than that of mere patriotism (which is so often the alleged motive of war) he was forbearing and forgiving and courteous and kind to his enemies, and never said a harsh word to any man.

It is related of his son-in-law Ali that once in battle, when he had thrown his antagonist to the ground and was bending over him to despatch him, the man looked up and spat in his face. At once the victor's sword-point was raised, and he said to the intended victim with a smile " Go, I cannot kill thee now—thou hast made it a personal quarrel."

* * *

Philosophy taught Socrates to greet Death with smiles—as Immortality; philosophy consoled Bœthius in prison, and philosophy supported and cheered the heart of Giordano Bruno at the stake. But perhaps, as in the case of Hypatia, philosophy had become religion with them. Absolute faith in the truth of what one believes, together with a certain exaltation of spirit caused by emotions that stir the heart, is religion. Religion has both philosophy and poetry in it. It is the highest thought and the purest emotion combined. It is the unrestrained volition of the human soul to mingle with the eternal divine. How intoxicating the access of such an emotion must be, we can easily imagine. We can also imagine how it must dominate the whole being of man in a supreme moment of trial, so as to make the body utterly insensitive to pain. This explains the rapture of martyrdom. But for us, ordinary mortals, who have to live our daily humdrum life in a more or less peaceful world of science and commerce, martyrdom on the cross or at the stake is an extremely remote contingency; and even imprisonment seems improbable—unless it be for some I. P. C. crime, or for the delirium of chronic politicitis.

What then had we better do? Try to have a proper appreciation of religion and philosophy in our hearts and rise by their aid to a higher level. Religion and morality go togeher, and they are necessary for our well-being. The best part

of every religion is the truth, purity and goodness enshrined in it. They are eternally the same and bring us happiness. What do the Holy books teach us? What message did the prophets bring to men? Only this: that the supreme Creator of the Universe is one and eternal, and that we come from him and return unto him. Such is our destination and we are moving towards it as gradually purified souls What does it matter if we spend a few days in prison or in another building, called our house; whether we lie in a bed or hang on a cross; whether we have an ice-bath or a flame-bath? The case in which we are packed is knocked out of shape before we have done with it, and has to be left behind. This is the essence of Philosophy and Religion.

* * *

Enough of the World

We are speeding onward in life like a motor car, and the journey is bringing us nearer to our destination day by day and hour by hour. Yet some of us cannot get rid of a certain impatient feeling to have it over soon. The road is still muddy and uneven, and the landscape unattractive.

A man sees quite enough of the world in about half a century, and has had time enough in which to do all his best active work. If at the end of that period he begins to feel the grey monotony of life somewhat oppressive, he is not much to blame. But at the same time he has to preserve his sense of duty and go on performing the functions of life conscientiously.

The sensuous perception of the beauty of life has to give place at this stage to a moral perception of it, and life has to be lived more in the mind than in the world outside. Still, the monotony of it all must needs be felt; it is not possible to escape it, especially as the vision of another and more lasting world assumes a definite form and becomes more and more attractive. After this the remaining portion of life on earth appears no better than a tardy process of dying!

* * *

Our Relativity

Our experience of life teaches us the "relativity" of things, and 'self' is the real measure of it. What concerns A,—possibly some trivial matter,—is far more important to him than a matter of life and death that concerns B. When B is relating his woes, A is thinking of his own little affairs and is bored by B's narrative, and wishes in his heart that B were in the other hemisphere! In the same way groups of men, communities and nations have their own pre-occupations and their own measure of the importance of affairs. A trading nation attaches the utmost importance to its trade relations, and a fighting nation to its conquests, and so on; and each finds ample justification on the ground of necessity, for its own favourite pursuits, and honestly believes that they are for the good of mankind! Now, which is the better and more important of the two? To answer this question another question is necessary—from whose point of view?

The traders', or the fighters'? The importance and the necessity are relative to each of them from their own point of view, and the point of view is that of "self"!

One sometimes comes across people who are so absorbed in their own petty affairs (the importance of which is monstrously exaggerated in their minds) as to be utterly indifferent to the most serious happenings outside their own little world. You may be talking to them about the fate of nations, but their minds are elsewhere, counting their unhatched chickens. You might as well talk to your Shylock creditor of the martyrdom of Socrates—or of your own martyrdom at his hands; he would remain unmoved and would go on calculating the compound interest due from you. Here is a case of direct "relativity". The getting of that compound interest is all-important to him, whereas getting rid of it—and of him if possible—is all-important to you!

Poverty

"Fecunda Virorum Paupertas" is a fine phrase used by Lucan. It is pregnant with meaning, and the meaning has great thought within it. Poverty, which the small mind ever dreads, may be the nurse of great minds and great deeds. *Fecunda virorum*, prolific of men, may not convey this sense directly, but indirectly it does. To take it in its literal sense would be to accept a mere platitude, for we all know that the majority of men in this world at any given

time are poor. If the object of the poet was merely to make this bald statement, he need not have taken the trouble to consider his words at all. There is something like the vision of genius in the phrase he has used. It is one of those expressions that spring up from the mind, ready-made, and we feel this. When we say so and so is a man, we do not mean to convey the uninteresting news that he is a male of the human species, but that he is endowed with the qualities that make a man in the best sense of the word. Lucan's meaning is not only clear but carries consolation and encouragement with it, and the phrase is one of those happy expressions that bring out and place before our eyes in the strongest light the hidden nobility of what appears sordid and contemptible to the common mind.

To no less a man than the founder of Islam is attributed the noble sentiment "my poverty is my pride," and it is well-known how few things he was proud of. Would it be untrue or an exaggeration to say that all great deeds and all great thoughts were born in, if not of, poverty? If we take the world's greatest men, we shall find among them hardly more than three or four whose genius was not nerved and stimulated by poverty. I can at this moment think only of any Alexander and Cæsar as the exceptions.

Is poverty then to be dreaded or scorned? Or is it to be hailed as the nurse of greatness?

* * *

Men and Institutions

Institutions cannot make men great or powerful, only Nature can do that. I cannot think of any great man known to history, who was made great (or greater) by the help of institutions alone, but I can recall the names of many great men who created great and useful institutions by the inborn strength of their own genius and character. Whatever institutions a people may have, whether of indigenous growth or borrowed or imitated from others, they cannot become powerful by their means alone if they themselves are weak by nature. Virility is not a school-taught quality, though it may be developed in school. We are apt to think that some form of Government which has been evolved by strong nations in the course of their progress towards freedom and power will, if given to us, make us at once powerful and free. It is a pleasing hope, but not good logic—at least, it is not the logic of Nature! Let us make ourselves strong first, and then we shall get the right sort of Government. But our strength must be real, not artificial; inherent, not borrowed from others. It must be born of, and nurtured by, truth and sincerity and fraternal unity.

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Object of Civilization

Nothing will ever convince me that the sole object of any civilization can be to make machines. Of course machine-making, in one of its aspects, is a highly intellectual pursuit attended by great

intellectual pleasure. Human ingenuity is ever seeking fresh fields for its activity, and delights in surpassing all previous records. But we must not forget that our life requires something else besides intellectuality. We are mind, but mind governed by moral emotions. It is therefore essential to our well-being and our happiness that with our intellectuality the moral part of our nature too should have proper opportunities of growth and expansion. Where there is a proper balance between the two, there a higher ideal of life exists, or is possible, and every effort to reach that ideal leads towards happiness. But when intellectuality is completely dissociated from moral feeling, the result may be a big gun that can destroy human life and human habitations at a hundred miles, or sea-mines that blow up great ships, or poisoned gas that destroys, not only human life, but the valour and chivalry of war! Only this, and nothing of true humanity. The possessor of the second highest intellect in the universe is said to have been deported from heaven on account of his insubordination and self-admiration and pride. He was an Angel—and may be one now for aught we know; but he differed from the other Angels in being completely free from morality, whereas they were all humble, meek, unoriginal, submissive beings, devoid of what we now call 'initiative'. Living among such an invertebrate population, he felt somewhat bored; and every moment the superiority of his own intellect and a sense of the unlimited power that lay hidden like electricity within him, tormented him. Thus, whatever

moral feelings he may have originally had were subjugated and finally annihilated by his indomitable pride of power and spirit of self determination. We can sympathize with him.

It would seem as though he was the spiritual ancestor of man, at least on one side of his nature ; hence man still follows his lead. But what man has to do is to borrow some of the old gentleman's cleverness and use it for *moral* purposes and thus cheat the D—. That would hardly be immoral ; and that to my mind is the true object of civilization !

Permanence of Early Impressions

Ideas and impressions received in youth have a lasting influence upon the mind. The mind of a boy (or a girl) at a certain age may be compared to a sensitized plate on which the faintest ray of light leaves a lasting impression. The receptivity of the mind at that age is at its highest, for nature is directing the mind to lay in a store of material for present and future use. Certain impressions left on my mind at the age of 18 are with me now ; they have always been with me to guide me in my journey through life. Some incident, some experience, something read in a book has had such an effect upon my mind that I have never been free from its influence. The unselfish simplicity of great minds, for instance, is one of those impressions or ideas which have become a permanent part of my creed. I think it was in 1889 that I happened to read at Cambridge a little book called

the "Ideal Commonwealths" edited by Henry Morley, in which the constitution of Lycurgus attracted my attention more than anything else. The stern simplicity of the Spartan discipline for forming character, for enabling the body to learn endurance, and the mind, courage and self-reliance, appealed to me in a special manner. But most of all, the picture of the elders meeting in their hall in the evening at a common mess—of which the favourite dish was "Black broth"—fascinated me. Whenever I think of unselfish citizenship rising to the height of paternal, almost patriarchal, guidance in the affairs of a community or a State, I see the black broth of Sparta in a great bowl before me, and in it I see drowned like flies, all the selfish merceinary designs of pretentious civicism or patriotism.

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Man-made Divisions of Humanity

Man has created so many artificial divisions and sections in humanity that one wonders whether the Powers that made him intended it to be so. Anyhow, they have allowed it. Man himself knows how arbitrary and artificial these divisions are, but he is not yet strong enough in mind to abolish them, or even to disregard them. He is still under the thraldom of the senses, and they are far too strong for his sense. White-skinned people do not like yellow or brown skins, brown skins do not like black skins. Jews and Christians and Muslims do not seem to love one another; Asia and Europe and

Africa and America would devour one another if they could. In some of these cases there is only physical repugnance at the bottom, and no more. Difference of mental qualities too there may be to some extent, but the physical difference helps to magnify and exaggerate it. If man's mind, purified and strengthened by education of the right sort, could rise above this mean and degrading conception of civilized man's importance in Nature's order of precedence, it may be possible in a thousand years or so, by means of a complete interfusion of the races to reach that alluring ideal, one nationality and one religion for all,—namely, Humanity.

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Human Perversity

There is a strong element of perversity in human nature. Man does not always err so much through ignorance as on account of some perverse tendency in him that leads him astray. If we examine our own actions, we shall find that we cannot honestly plead ignorance to justify or excuse most of them. In some cases conscience will accuse us of deliberately choosing the wrong course, and our wrong choice may be the result of our selfishness, which in some form or other is the real motive force behind our actions. Are we to take shelter behind the convenient theory of predestination by saying "our selfishness too, is pre-ordained"? This theory carried too far may easily become the creed of villainy. What

heaps of wise-looking foolish stuff erudite metaphysicians have accumulated round this theme of predestination and free-will!

Milton, in his Paradise Lost, poetically argues the case. We may or may not agree with his arguments, but we cannot help agreeing with his conclusion. The best solution of the problem is this: What God permits to be done is not necessarily what he ordains. The Koran has in many places touched upon this. It says that the right way has been pointed out and the wrong way too has been indicated; man has been endowed with the power to choose; and whatever he does, whether good or evil, will affect his own soul.

We know all this; we also know good from evil—and yet we often choose the latter, because it is either more pleasant or more lucrative. This is from perversity, not from ignorance. There is no superior compulsion in it.

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Utopia

When Sir Thomas Moore chose the title "Utopia" for his imaginary socialistic state, the word meant 'nowhere'; but now it may be said to mean 'somewhere'. What the human mind imagines and continually contemplates becomes possible of attainment if in its nature it is possible. In the middle of the 16th century, when he wrote his little book, he considered the state of society conceived by him so far from

being possible that he was obliged to lay the scene in Persia! Now see what has happened during these last three centuries and a half! the dreams of socialism are no longer dreams—they are in the process of 'materialising', and attempts are being made, by fair means or foul, to make them a practical reality. It has been considered necessary in some countries to resort to brutal ways in order to hasten the millennium. Although it is somewhat like killing a man to make him good, yet the ultimate desire is to bring about a state of peace and happiness for all.

Is it not a matter for wonder that Islam should have quietly established equality and fraternity, both in poverty and in competence, long centuries before Europe began to think of such matters?

The best that one can find in Sir Thomas More's "Utopia", has been our common property for more than thirteen hundred years!

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Mind and Muscle

It is doubtful whether we have yet found the means of training the faculties of the mind as well as we can train the muscles of the body. The gymnastic exercises that one sees performed by young boys nowadays are so amazing that they suggest this question. Take a school class, and you will find that nearly all of them who have gone through the requisite training, perform all the gymnastic exercises equally well. Their

limbs have been taught to go through the same motions in the same manner in the same time, and the result is the amazing uniformity we observe in their performance. The same boys have been taught the same book lessons in the same way by the same teacher; but the examination results do not show the same uniformity of mental attainment as the gymnastics! How is that? Are we to believe that the mental faculties themselves are unequal? Or that there was difference in attention and application? Or that exactly the same degree of care was not bestowed by the teacher on everyone of them? Here is a problem for educationalists.

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Living in the Present

Some say that we should live in the present because the past and the future are not ours, and some say that we cannot live in the present because it is a minute fragment of a moment and is gone before we can make any use of it.

According to the first direction, we should give no thought to the past or the future because they are not ours, and according to the second, since we cannot capture and make the present ours, all our thoughts and all our work must relate to the past and the future! How would it be to say in this case that we do not live at all? or to say that there is no such state of being as past or present or future for us; that we simply *are* from the moment of our birth till we disappear

from this earth. And afer that? Perhaps it would be right to say that we still are, for there are no tenses in eternity, where we always *are*.

This is the metaphysical side of the case; but considered in its earthly aspect, it presents serious difficulties. Is it possible for a thinking being with a memory and an imagination to live entirely in the present like an animal? If there were no memories behind, and no hopes before, man would be worse than an animal, and no better than a machine that is whirling round perpetually and aimlessly.

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Modern Politicians

In the 4th century B.C. philosophers attempted to base politics on ethics; and in the 20th century A.D. educated people are trying to fix politics on what they consider to be a more secure basis—human brutality! The philosopher's idea of politics was a harmonious system of refined social relations for conducting the affairs of the polity, as his idea of ethics was a harmonious system of refined conduct worthy of a rational civilized being. But the modern politician, in some countries at least, thinks it his first duty to subvert any existing form of Government so that he may substitute for it himself and his accomplices as heralds of a golden age!

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The Soul's Pure Gratitude

Great is the heart that can be full of gratitude to Providence though having nothing, and great the soul that can maintain its peace and elevation in the midst of poverty and suffering. It is a consolation to think that our "civilization" compounded of militant politics and aggressive commercialism, has not yet succeeded in destroying this noble quality in man. This fact and a few others like it would seem to have saved man's humanity from utter destruction.

It is easy enough to imagine how man could, by increasing the pace of his material and mechanical progress, get further and further away from his finest spiritual qualities and be able in the end to despise them as useless. He is already inclined to do so, and the more money he makes by his commerce and industries, and the faster he moves through space by means of his mechanical contrivances, and the more land he annexes, the greater will be his faith in the creed of wordly success. This is what we are coming to. Europe has set the standard of progress and Asia must rush towards it! Was it not Asia that set the standard once and for all time for the true well-being of man by giving him religion, which enshrines truths the highest of the high and the holiest of the holy? Those truths are not dead, and they cannot die. They have lived while man-made empires and civilizations and systems have floated awhile on the surface of things and vanished one after another.

All that remains and shall remain for all eternity is the soul's relation with its Creator.

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Doing Good to Others is doing Good to Oneself

Doing good to others is doing good to oneself,—to one's own soul; and the first and last social and religious duty of man is to do good. It seems as though he was created only for this purpose. But what does doing good mean? The innumerable forms which it can take, and the innumerable ways in which good can be done, make it difficult to define precisely in what doing good consists. But whatever lines we follow, it means the same thing ultimately; hence here should be no difficulty in understanding our duty. There is a kind of instinct in us which tells us what good is, and how to do it, and we all know that doing good to others is no more than helping them in some way or other. Lowest in the scale, as we also know, is helping with money, except where it is done to relieve actual distress. Next comes that sort of help which enables another to find means of subsistence, that is, to earn an honest livelihood.

The highest form of doing good to another is to help to guide his soul in the right direction. (We need not trouble to enquire whether he has a soul or not; we are to assume it and proceed accordingly!) Religion teaches us that Heaven is only for those who believe in God and do good. Does it not follow from this that we

have to believe in truth and righteousness, and that there can be no doing good unless we do what is right. Purity of motive, purity of intent, purity of means and methods, and a sincere desire to do what will be approved, not by man, but by God—all these essential conditions are implied, and there is conscience to guide us.

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Dissension caused by Religious Bigotry

The narrow-minded bigotry and intolerance of those who are recognized as leaders in religious affairs is one of the chief causes of dissension among mankind; and in this respect they are the greatest evil-doers. If we have sincere faith in the truth and purity of our own religion, does it follow that we should decry other religions and quarrel with those who believe in them? Which is better and more worthy of a refined nature: to try and find out the best that there may be in every religion and admit that they all help to lead to God through righteousness, or to knock down one another in our zeal to establish His kingdom?

If there be a sincere desire on our part to find out which of the religions contain the largest number of those principles and precepts which help to purify, strengthen, and exalt the spirit along the path of righteousness, the task will not be difficult. And if we wished to examine the subject in a friendly discourse with followers of other faiths, each of the parties could make

a list of all such principles and precepts and directions and injunctions and prohibitons as are actually to be found in their Scriptures or holy books, for the purpose of comparison. This would reveal the truth.

Every religion that enjoins faith in the one supreme Creator of all and points out the right way and the wrong way to man, is good. The more apparent the rational truths contained in it, the stronger will be its appeal to man's intellect. And no wise man would hesitate to accept these two propositions as articles of faith—the absolute unity of God, and the ethical utility of religion. But he would not as readily accept the need of a complex mystery and a sacramental ritual as essential to religion, nor would he care to waste his time in quarrelling over these.

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The Day of Reckoning

"The day of reckoning draweth nigh." Thus are we reminded of what our own conscience and judgment are telling us from day to day.

A chapter of the Koran opens with these words, and after a few lines we are told that truth overtakes falsehood and breaks its head! This image appeals to me; and I should like to see the head of Untruth frequently broken—as an incident of the reckoning of which we are reminded.

We in our heedlessness (and sometimes in our impatience) think that the reckoning and

the retribution are tardy, but it is not so. 'Raro antecendentem Scelestum deseruit pede Poena claudo.' Here the halting foot of Retribution is the result of our own limitations, for time is a conception of our own mind, and its measure is relative to us. But let us try to get out of our sense-limitations for a moment and look upon our affairs from the point of view of the All-seeing. Then our years become a mere moment, even millions of years become Now,—and the halting foot of Retribution is made swift and strong. Is this the very truth, or a mere chimera of the Philosopher's brain? Curiously enough, it is positively stated in the Koran that our thousands of years are but a day to God! Is it a mere coincidence that both religion and philosophy have hit upon the same idea? It is a wise dispensation of the All-wise that Truth is made cognizable by the human mind, and that it overtakes and overcomes Falsehood and Error.

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Imitation

It has often been observed that the vulgar love to imitate the vices and follies of the great. But what is the cause of the attraction? Is it merely the desire to appear to belong to a superior class or a higher rank, born of an irksome consciousness of not belonging to it?

I have no fault to find with a wholesome spirit of emulation. I have an admiration for those who earnestly desire to improve themselves

and rise to a higher level, and I venerate those who try to follow in the footsteps of persons of virtue and honour. But people are seldom attracted by such qualities as are not visible to the common eye. A (who belongs to the proletariat) sees B driving in his Rolls-Royce to a fashionable restaurant and ordering a dinner or supper the cost of which would keep his own family in food and clothes for six months. This causes a revolution in A's brain; he longs to be able to do the same; and when he gets a little money he tries it on a small scale, consumed by the spirit of envious admiration which burns through and through him like a flame. Now it happens that B who committed that pleasant imitable folly and upset A's mental balance so completely, has certain other less imitable qualities in him, such as truthfulness, moral courage and loyalty to high principles. Poor A can hardly recognize these qualities or understand them when they are expressed in action; and of course he and his class are much less capable of appreciating them when they are employed in tacit resistance to evil. In short, A can see B's follies and vices, but not his virtues; and it is only natural that he should imitate the former and dress himself up in them in order to assume a semblance of B's external dignity and importance.

A Nation's Pride in its History

"Happy is the nation that has no history." Yet we find that every nation takes a pride in its history, such as it may be—or imagines a history that may nourish its pride. Some nations, as we

know, have a grand history which is writ large on the face of the earth. There are others that believe that they too in the dim and distant past have had a grand history the traces of which are lost. This proves the existence of the instinct of hero-worship (and self-laudation) in man. Man likes to think of great deeds if he cannot perform them. And thinking is easier and pleasanter than performing. It is quite possible that by thinking constantly of them some feeling like second-hand heroism may be roused in his breast and enable him to feel vicariously great.

This too is a gain.

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Mind Your Own Affairs

'Mind your own affairs' is good, wholesome advice, though it sounds somewhat rude. If each of us minded his (or her) own affairs what a nice, peaceful little world this would be! To look down into our own hearts, to examine the "black ingrained spots" there, and to allow conscience to induce intelligence to give them a good scrubbing with moral soap-water would be useful and desirable. It is indeed a necessary operation by way of a Spring cleaning before we proceed to set our house in order. There will be plenty of occupation for us, and very little time, if any, left for meddling with other people's affairs, or for exercising our faculties in the gentle art of unlowing our neighbours. To love them as we are enjoined, ought to be natural to us; but we easily let ourselves go in the opposite

direction. The more superficially sociable we are, the less sincere is our affection for our friends.

People who have neglected and are neglecting their own affairs are ever busy discussing the affairs—domestic, social, economic and political—of other people with whom they have nothing whatever to do. They find fault without hesitation, and condemn without thinking of the state of their own concerns. Often the most irresponsible man among them—a bankrupt both in morals and money—poses as a censor, and this is one of the most amazing spectacles presented by 'polite' Society!

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Sense of Duty

'Sense of duty' is a common expression with us now, and nearly all those who know English use it—especially when they are criticising other people. It is an expression reserved for the exclusive benefit of the 3rd person singular, when it has a negative connotation. We seldom hear any one say that he finds himself deficient in that sense!

In the case of most of us the remark has its origin in an uncomfortable semi-consciousness of our own imperfection in that respect, and we take the first opportunity of disburdening our conscience by passing on our responsibility to another. Thus we find almost every half-educated man discovering a want of the sense

of duty in almost every other person from the 1st of January to the 31st of December every year. This universal condemnation would be true but for the solitary exception which the speaker makes in his own favour. If he included himself, he would be an honest, truth-loving, useful member of society, moved by a strong sense of duty !

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To feel Oneself in the Eternal

To feel itself in the eternal is the mind's paradise. Only a few learn the lesson, and that towards the end of life. It is a great lesson. It gives man strength and assurance, and enables him to rise above the so-called troubles of life, which gradually vanish into nothingness. The relative importance of things begins to be viewed from another point, so that what was once found indispensable becomes not only useless, but a thing to be avoided. This explains why sages have preferred the hermit's life. In the midst of changing conditions and transitory interests it is not easy to find that serenity which alone can induce a sense of permanence and participation in the eternal—the object they have in view.

* * *

Know Thyself

' Know thyself ' ! This is the advice given by Nature to man. It was put in these very words thousands of years ago by the Greek who was the preceptor of mankind ; but it remains unheeded to this day. Man does not care to know

himself as he is, but likes to believe himself to be what he fancies; and his fancies are prompted by his desires. He has invented a happy phrase, which may be applied to him—" vicious circle, " he is that in more senses than one! A is what he is, but thinks himself, not what he is but what he would like to be thought by others, and eventually comes to believe that he really is what he would be thought. B sees A, not as he is, but as B thinks him to be—a picture very different from A's own fancy-picture. Here we have three pictures. Which is the real A?

To put it in the language of science, let us say that we can make A synthetically by putting together all the bad qualities B attributes to him and all the good qualities he attributes to himself. But what about those qualities (actual or potential) that remain hidden in the dark unexplored recesses of A's ' sub-conscious ' self? Who could dive down into that dark abyss when A himself is unable to do it? Here is the real difficulty of knowing oneself. The subconscious has hitherto been our South Pole; but we need not despair of exploring it. Does not our subconscious occasionally throw up little bubbles from below the surface? May it not be that those little bubbles, when they arrange themselves on the surface in intelligible forms and diagrams, become our conscious self? Would it not, therefore, be permissible to infer that our 'sub-conscious' must be very much like our 'conscious' for all practical purposes? They are only top and bottom; there is no essential difference of quality between them.

Let us devote some of our time to studying ourselves in this way, and we may get to know ourselves more and more, and perhaps find a pigeon-hole in the Universal Scheme where we may ultimately fit in.

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Possible and Impossible

Man thinks nothing impossible where his own powers are concerned; but he considers many things impossible where God's Omnipotence is concerned! Modest man seems to claim all Nature as his own exclusive domain,—and if God be there, He can be there only on sufferance.

Man is fond of giving names to things, and having done so, believes that he has made those things himself! And when he is permitted to make use of Nature's powers, in however restricted a measure, for his own benefit, he boasts of having "harnessed" Nature. It must be confessed with sorrow that man has very little reverence in his composition, and a great deal of vulgar egotism. He is not thankful for what he is given, but likes to brag of his own heroic part in obtaining it. Verily, he is ungrateful!

A friend was talking to me the other day about our belief or unbelief regarding the transference of a human being *bodily* from one place to another by supernatural means. Many people, said he, thought it impossible, but he himself believed, that it was not impossible. This made me reflect

that after all there is no such thing as supernatural in the Universe, and nothing impossible in Nature. All means are within Nature's powers and within the competence of Nature's God. Science itself serves to prove this.

The wonderful cases recorded in the transactions of the Psychical Research Society throw a powerful light on this subject and lead us to hope that the veil will be lifted some day.

To those of us who have actually seen physical objects transported from one place to another by some mysterious invisible agency, it seems easy enough to understand that if there are such forces in Nature there must be greater power in Nature's God.